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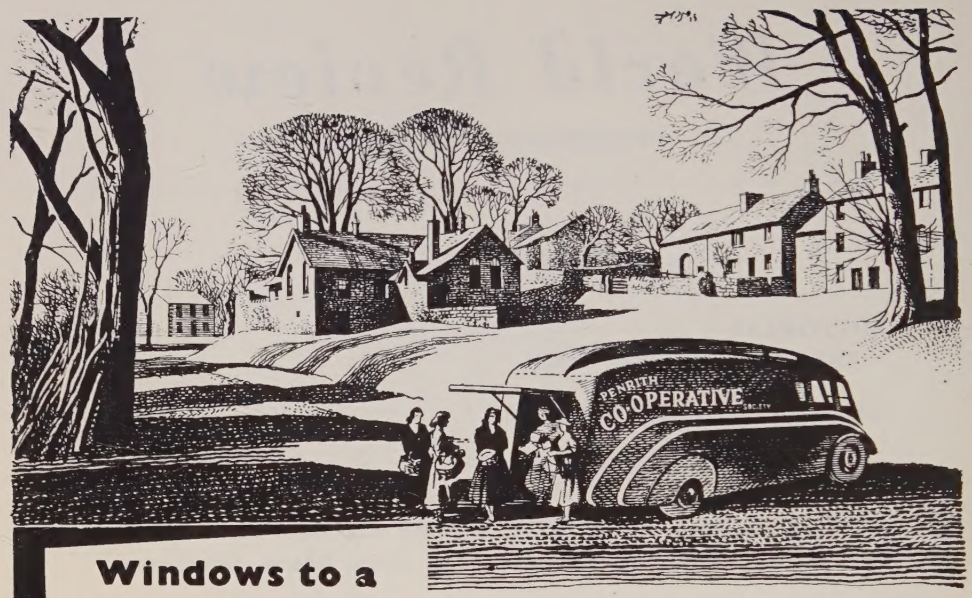

Windows to a New World

One of Penrith Co-operative Society's Mobile Shops.
Drawn by Rowland Hilder R.I.

From the ancient Cumberland market town of Penrith, Mobile Shops of the Co-operative Society take C.W.S goods through some of the most beautiful scenery in Britain to supply the needs of the outlying farm and lonely Lakeland village.

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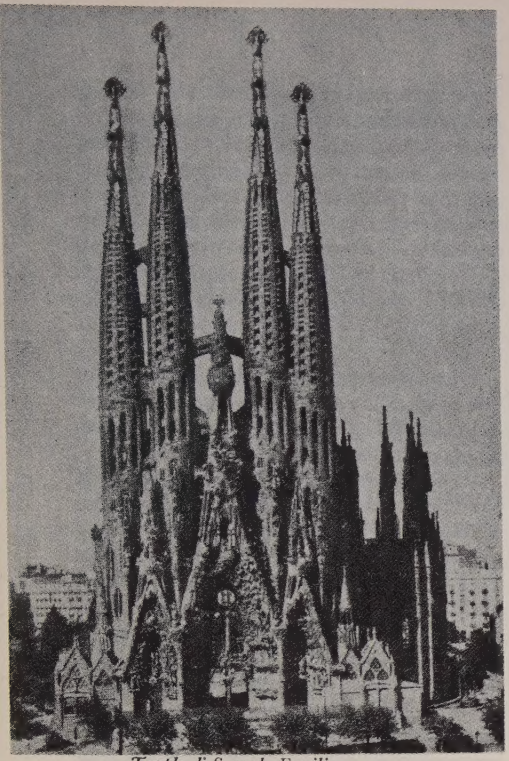
CWS

AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE CO-OPERATIVE WHOLESALE SOCIETY LIMITED



Templo di Sagrada Familia

EDITORIAL

I AM publishing these notes on a visit to Spain I made this autumn, not with the object of irritating my readers by talking about my holidays (this I am afraid is the effect of a great deal of finely-written travel literature), but because I undertook it with a definite reason. I wanted to find out about contemporary painting, writing and music in Spain, and since these things travel, and always have travelled, slowly across the Pyrenees, I went there myself.

* * *

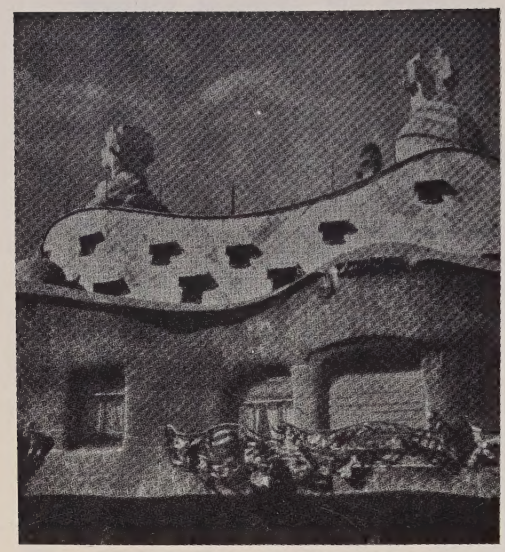
Not to go to Barcelona when entering Spain through France, on the grounds that it is not a picturesque city or 'not Spanish' is a grave mistake. It is the only true capital in the country, being vital to the point of cantankerousness, and its beautiful cathedral is a restful introduction to the Gothic architecture of Catalonia, since in its thick darkness almost nothing can be seen except the ferocious Moors' head underneath the organ, one of the finest in Spain, with its red cheeks and beard and whiskers of real hair. But if we leave the antiquities aside—Phoenician, Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, Gothic, Moorish—because so much has already been written about them and so well, there is still this most important reason for visiting Barcelona.

Barcelona is the capital of the most neglected of all architectural styles, Nouveau Art, and of perhaps the one and only genius that the style produced. This was Antonio Gaudi, the son of a coppersmith, who was born in 1852 and died in 1926,and during his lifetime, though he had in fact but few patrons, succeeded in changing the face of his native city. In his old age he reverted to an extreme simplicity of life, and a Tolstoy-like dress with a black suit and straw hat only for feast-days. Accordingly, when he was run over by a tram, he was picked up as a poor old man of no importance. He died shortly afterwards.

Gaudi's great work, the Church of the Sagrada Familia, which was to be erected by public subscription, was left unfinished at the time of his death. Its cone-like towers are one of the first glimpses of Barcelona from the aeroplane and have been adopted as an emblem of the city. It is a Temple of Expiation for the blasphemies of the Semana Tragica of 1909, when the inhabitants (as it seems they must do from time to time) began to massacre priests and ended by burning down some sixty churches. Although only one façade is completed, Mass is said in the crypt and the place is packed out.

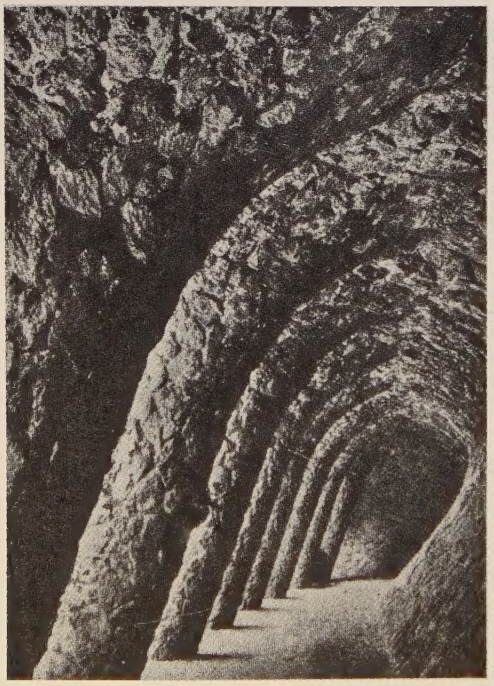
Anyone looking for the first time at the Sagrada Familia must wonder what is going to happen next. There were no plans, for it was not Gaudi's habit to make any. An exact mathematician, he worked from little models in which the stresses and strains were represented by weights hanging from cotton threads. These, unfortunately, were destroyed during the Civil War and there is left only one cloudy drawing, a kind of vision of the completed church.

A further difficulty is that he was working on it with a band of disciples, one of whom, and not Gaudi himself, designed the famous twisted mosaic spires, with



Casa Mila, Barcelona

Leaning Columns, Parque Guell



their ornament of china balls and flashing golden *Hosanna in Excelsis.* (Another project was a glass cloud which would float round the spires and be illuminated at night.) But it was in any case the old man's dream that the work should be corporate and should be added to by each generation. When finished (if it is ever finished) it will be the highest church in the world.

* * *

The best place to start, however, is not with the comparatively well-known Sagrada Familia, but with a visit to the Parque Guell.[1]

If this park is visited at twilight, as it should be, the effect is romantic to the point of sensationalism. It is laid out on the side of a steep hill so that you go in up steps past a fountain rising from a stonehead with a crab-like, cowl-like shell of mosaic. The walls glitter with encrustations of mica, and there is a very strange lodge, like a Hänsel and Gretel house, its roof covered with a huge lozenge pattern, peaked and crimped and drawn up into an immensely tall chimney—and yet it is not quite fairy-tale either. As you go higher, it gets darker, and you find, by putting out your hand, that you can no longer tell the difference between trees and stone columns made like trees, or faces and half-human shapes growing out of the walls.

The first stage on the way up is a forest of columns, none of them quite straight, all of them leaning slightly towards you, and fading away into the thick darkness, while, somewhere above, you can hear the bats twittering near the ceiling. If you strike a match to look at the ceiling, you will see a mosaic of a curious kind, including not only *azulejos,* but broken cups and bits of pottery and the staring faces of dolls. The bats shriek and dance away.

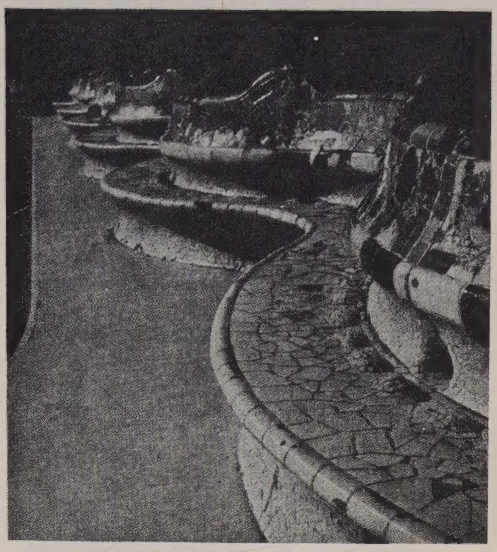
Higher still, between hedges of eucalyptus and cactus and a plant with a strong, sweet, but animal smell, is a row of palm trees and stone cannonballs, and then a huge plateau, impressive in its bareness. You walk to the edge and from far below comes a muffled roar from Barcelona by night, strung out with its maze of lights and humming with activity and fierce disputes and sharp business and the frenzied

[1] On cover: *The Gate Lodge, Parque Guell*

cooking of sea-food. And if you look down at the terrace wall, against which you are leaning, you cannot help noticing how well it suits Barcelona, for it is itself like a rolling breaker in a way that almost induces seasickness. But by this time you may have got the feel of that rolling movement and of the avenues which diminish like the perspectives of a dream, and should at the end lead to the little door of which only Bluebeard has the key.

At the very top, if the light has not faded, you reach the strangest house of all, with towers suspended over nothing and thin chimneys shooting high into the dusk. And to the right of you, against the evening sky, you see another hill-top with a cross—El Calvario.

And all this was designed, not as a park at all, but as a workers' settlement! Each of these strange houses was to be allotted to a working-class family, who would have also a triangular piece of land. The plateau was to be the recreation ground and the leaning columns with their roof of dolls and broken crockery was designed as a market-place. Such were the plans of Gaudi and his enthusiastic patron, Count Guell.



The Terrace, Parque Guell

Here is the clue—in the moral purpose and, as it were, the enormity of the whole thing. It is difficult to describe any of Gaudi's work without giving the impression of gingerbread or Grand Exhibition architecture. The effect is far otherwise. Indeed, in the flats and houses which he built in the Paseo de Gracia, it is the sincerity of the architect which is reflected in the giant strength of the buildings.[1] However fantastic we may find the flats of the Casa Mila, where the rooms undulate inside as well as out (Gaudi had designed special furniture), or the crab-like roof of the Casa Battio, we cannot deny that strength or its strange effectiveness in the brazen Mediterranean sun.

La Lavandera, Parque Guell

But Gaudi could have flourished, surely, only in Barcelona, which, to repeat, far more than Brussels, is the city of Art Nouveau. The style was at home there and broke out in bottle-glass insertions in the riotous furniture of the Liceo (the only

1 One of the secrets of this was the hall-mark of Gaudi's work, the asymmetrical arch which combined the strength of the normal Gothic arch and the buttress, and made it possible for him to use very slender columns and apparently miraculous feats of balance, cf : the illustration of the porticos of the Parque Guell

opera-house in Spain) and in the stalls of the main food market, where the electric light bulbs flower out of a twining bush of wrought iron. It is in comparison with this, or with a building like the Palacio del Musica, with its lyres and pepper-pots and booking offices built *into* the thickness of the supporting columns that Gaudi's true stature appears. With this Palacio, as with Guimard's entrances to the Paris Metro, the decoration is, after all, only applied. Gaudi's buildings are far otherwise. They surge out of the streets, out of the plains of cement, like living things petrified in the act of birth. Gaudi's friends talk of the strange tension which existed within him, his child-like piety and resignation on the one hand and on the other his secret torment and his conviction of the impossibility of happiness.

These violent hidden struggles 'broke out' in his impatience with the stone (he treated it like clay) and in the '*protesta lirica*' of his truly extraordinary forms. A comparison is sometimes made with the art of Equatorial Africa and in particular with the cone-shaped sacrificial temples of Edschu, which are described by Frobenius in his Kulturgeschichte Afrikas. But these explorations of Frobenius were made in 1910 and it was in 1892 that Gaudi made his designs for a Franciscan mission church in Tangier, which was to have just the same cigar-shaped spires. The truth is that he was that rarity—an artist who was capable of inventing.

It is to be noted (without any explanation, however) that Gaudi distorted his buildings but not his statues (such as the angels, sea-urchins and octopuses of the Sagrada Familia, and the beautiful Lavandera of the Parque Guell) and not the exquisite wrought-iron work which is a feature of nearly everything he did. Gaudi, who was capable of designing and probably making every part of a building, designed his own ironwork, and for the first time this ancient and traditional art of Spain was given what might literally be called a modern twist. Sometimes, as in the Casa Mila, the metal is simply crumpled up, most effectively, like a handful of paper. And then again there are the iron-streamers on the trumpets of the angels of the Sagrada Familia, which seem to float on the air in their lightness and delicacy.

It is, of course, easy to laugh at Gaudi's buildings, and many writers have done so, while at the same time admiring the Palacio de Marqués de Dos Aquas at Valencia. What is more, the mere mention of his name drives many of the inhabitants of Barcelona into a frenzy, convinced as they are that '*el gaudiniano*' has been the supreme folly which has ruined their beloved city.

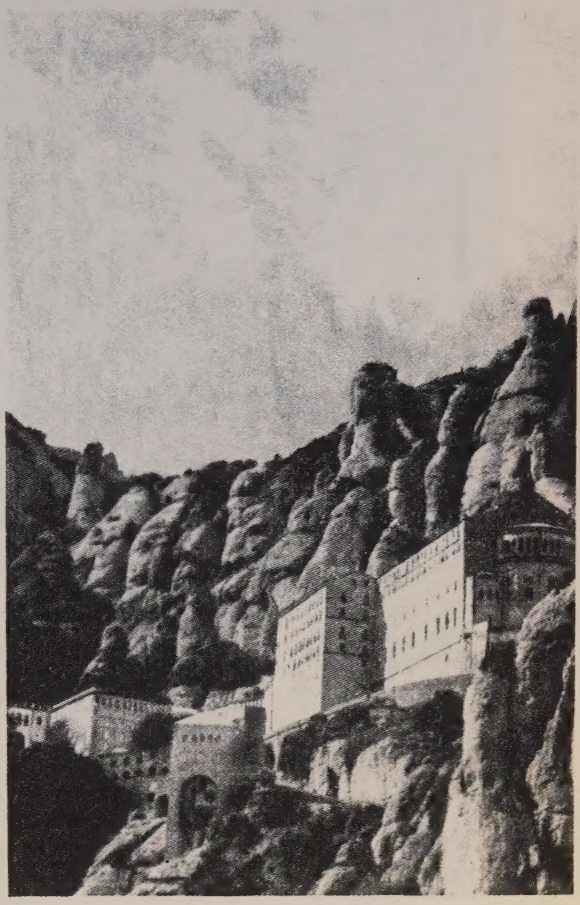
There has lately been a tendency to look at his work as an anticipation of plastic dynamism or surrealism or an 'influence' on Picasso and Salvador Dali. All these points of view are only to be expected. Woe unto the original artist particularly if, as an architect must be, he is obtrusive! But Gaudi's own definition of originality was 'to return to own's origins.' His origins were—the art of the coppersmith, the passion of a naturalist, the training of an architect and the unaccountable spirit of Catalonia.

THE ASCENT OF MONTSERRAT

Barcelona has one of the most beautiful sites possible, and is backed with mountains which exceed the world's dreams of mountains. The bus winds with difficulty up through bluffs covered with clinging green shrubs, holly, eucalyptus, birch and honeysuckle, while far above against a blue sky more dazzling than china tiles, tower the fantastic rain-worn shapes of the mountains which arose from the depths of a prehistoric sea. Names have been given to these heights ('The Enchanted Giant', 'The Fingers', 'The Flutes', 'The Skulls', or, as the Arabs called them, 'The Stone Watchers'), but they give rather the idea of shapes immemorial, to which life might come unexpectedly, like the colossal heads of Rome which, in times of emergency, are heard speaking to each other at midnight. On one side of the bus, the passengers, chewing hard sandwiches, look down into the abyss, on the other, up to the pinnacles of rock. All are sightseers, even the priests with their brief-cases, going on official business to the Monastery. The children are delighted, for this is a family pilgrimage, and their parents are taking them to pray before the Black Virgin of Montserrat.

Montserrat is a holy place, perhaps the Montsalvat, the unapproachable and mysterious resting-place of the Holy Grail. The mountain is supposed to have been rent in two with the rending of the Veil of the Temple, since nothing less than the hour of the Crucifixion could have caused that yawning abyss. Higher up, much higher still, can be seen the caves and the ruins of the old hermitages, nests for eagles rather than men, perched on ledges over the gulf where the temptation for the holy man to dash himself down, trusting to the gathering hands of the angels, must have been terrible to resist. It is on the site of a ninth-century hermitage that the Abbey of Montserrat was originally built. It has been from the first a Benedictine house and the liturgical rites of the Church are celebrated there to the last magnificent detail.

In this eyrie, two thousand feet up in the coldest, brightest air between heaven and earth, in the heart of the sacred mountain, the new monastery has been built, a place of learning and influence not less than the old but in appearance a cross between a biscuit factory and a technical college. The Benedictines conduct everything with the greatest efficiency. They provide beds and blankets and, for a small fee, a frying-pan, knives and forks. As for food, several old



Montserrat

El Greco: Mount Sinai

'Madona de Montserrat, Pregueu per Nosaltres'

ladies in black shawls sit in the courtyard on monumental haunches, selling cheese and garlic sausages.

There is also a bar and a shop which sells postcards. This reproduction of one of them (showing the Black Virgin and the Escolania, the famous boys' choir, founded in the thirteenth century) draws attention to what can scarcely be missed, that surrealism is a native art in Spain.

The church bell rang for High Mass, and people scurried to and fro, up and down the break-neck steps from the village with the feverish activity of a Bruegel. In the richly-restored interior, the congregation looked up through a sea cave of fretted gold to the dearly loved Black Virgin high above in her chamber. She was certainly made (even if not by St. Luke) to be seen from far below where the large head appears in perfect proportion, darkly smiling in peace beyond understanding.

An aerial railway takes you up higher still to the hermitages of San Giovanni and San Juan, and the cave where the Black Virgin herself was hidden during the Moorish occupation. This is the domain of family parties who are lighting fires (the smoke goes straight up to the clear sky), and begin one by one to sing and play the guitar; nobody wastes money by going to the restaurant built into the living rock and now carefully planted with geraniums and bougainvilia. It even has a grotto with a brass tap dripping precious water.[1] The ceiling of the restaurant gets lower

[1] Very few people now go to see Murillo's once famous 'Thirst', in the Hospital of La Caridad in Seville, which expresses once and for all time the preciousness of water in Spain

Dali's *Don Juan Tenorio.* *Reproduced by courtesy of the Teatro Maria Guerroro*

and higher according to the height of the crevice in the rock and at the end has a little Mirador baked in the sun like a lizard.

Here you are above the light wisps of cloud and, even more impressive, above the birds, while below is the whole plain of Catalonia.

But to be left here alone after dark, after the darkness had crept up from the valley! One hermit lived here for years crouched on his hands and knees; others during the Peninsular War were hunted like animals by General Suchet's men when the French took over the monastery as a garrison fort, suddenly appearing out of the midst of the valley to break the ancient solitude.

* * *

Barcelona, when we left, was waiting eagerly for the arrival of the new production of Don Juan Tenorio, with settings by Salvador Dali. Don Juan in Zorilla's version is given every year on or about November 1 (All Souls' Day).

The play, which was written by Zorilla in 1845 in a kind of spirited doggerel, is in fact a serious morality. '*Libertinaje y escandalo*' are treated only in the first few scenes, while the recriminations of the statue are excessively long, and the last Act is given up to '*Misericordia de Dios y apoteosis del Amor*'. The final stage direction (Don Juan and Dona Ines are both on the point of death) is 'The flowers open and give passage to various angels who float round Dona Ines and Don Juan, scattering over them flowers and perfumes, and to the sound of sweet music the theatre is illumined with the light of dawn. . . Don Juan falls at the feet of Dona Ines and they both die. From their mouths their souls fly up, represented by two brilliant lights which are lost in space to the sound of music.' This alone gives a good idea of the kind of effects and stage machinery which the audience expected. The actors are used to all this and used, too, to coming well forward on the stage to deliver their soliloquies, and are said to have been disconcerted by Dali's ideas. The fusty inn scene, with comfortable property benches and tankards was replaced by a brilliant set hung round with Picasso-like plates which, at the climax of the play, fell down on the stage and were shattered with fragments,[1] while the spirits of the departed appeared in the obscene half-animal shapes of Bosch's *Temptation of St. Anthony.*

When we went to the Teatro Maria Guerrero in Madrid to obtain photographs of the performance, the statue of the Commendatore glimmered with the spectral whiteness of plaster through the total darkness back-stage. It had been put there for storage. Dali had made it in a posture of agony, with a large sword through the heart (as in some of the statues of the Virgen de Gran Dolor), and in the shadows it was frightening.

The name of Dali is never left for very long out of discussions of art in Barcelona.

1 Which is a practical demonstration of the cheapness of pottery in Spain. Hundreds of thousands of charming little painted jugs and cups at about a penny each are made out of the earth and returned to it

He is a 'native son', having drawn so much of his inspiration from the city and from the seashore of Las Rosas where, as a little boy in a sailor suit, he went for holidays. But Dali does not appear, as he does to us, simply as the clever populariser of surrealism in the United States. He is remembered as one of the most brilliant of the group which surrounded Frederico Garcia Lorca in the vanished golden time of the early 'thirties, and therefore as one who 'betrayed' the artistic revolution.

* * *

A few weeks ago Dali, exquisitely sensitive as ever to the 'trend', appeared in Barcelona to give a lecture on his change of heart—'Why I was sacrilegious and am now a mystic.' He exhibited the large picture of the Virgin of Port Lligat, which he has also shown to the Pope. A piece of hard Spanish bread (the well-known 'Basket of Bread 1945' was supposed to symbolise the Marshall Plan), from the loaf which he paints with truly magic realism, is a recent addition to the picture and symbolises the Holy Communion. Dali's present aim, he said, was to adapt surrealism to the cause of religion, 'in the tradition of St. Teresa, Zusbaran, Valdès Leal and others' (a curious combination since Valdès Leal was the painter of too realistic corpses of saints, before which Murillo used to hold his nose).

* * *

Spain is so full of antiquities carelessly scattered about (and after all why waste them? A basilica or a fort that was good enough for the Romans is good enough now to keep cattle or grow figs in) that every traveller can be his own discoverer. But, after all, can there be anything more startling than to find in the very centre of the Peninsula, on a high burning tableland that breathes of Africa, a sort of Berlin or Whitehall, where pedestrians are only allowed to cross the road at the sound of a whistle, where excessive importance is attached to the General Post Office, guarded night and day by men with submachine guns, and where perpetual conferences of international authors philatelists, oleiculturists, pathologists, etc., keep the huge buildings fluttering with flags and the officials in a state of harassed resignation? It is, in fact, a curious experience to fly straight from Barcelona to Madrid.

'I don't love the Spanish as cosmopolitans. The Spanish are very badly adapted to the twentieth century,' said a critic who spent as much time as he could in a small village a hundred miles from Madrid (it took him three days to get there) and wrote novels of the earth and the peasantry (which were rejected by his publishers). To the capital, however, artists must come at some time or other if they are not to starve. It is necessary to go to Madrid not only to see the Prado, but to find out about the modern painting in Spain.

* * *

The great Spanish painter of recent times (since the departure, that is, of Picasso and Mirò) is José Guturriez Solana. His greatness has been recognised for a considerable time in Spain itself and in France, but his fame appears to be almost as slow as Goya's in travelling to England.

Solana was a man of great character, eccentric, single-minded and dearly loved by his friends. Legends rapidly grew up about him. His father was the son of a rich business man, comfortably off and a collector of books. Solana himself was born in 1885, and was the fourth son of ten children. At school he was interested only in drawing and the circus, and in the end he had to be sent to another school in Santander. Later, when he was fourteen (his father had died and his mother was more and more absorbed in religion), he entered the Escuela de Bellas Artes de San Fernando in Madrid, but here, too, he was an unsatisfactory student. Most of his time was spent in tabernas, talking and drinking, and the only class which interested him was anatomy. This subject became an obsession with him, and he haunted the public wards of hospitals, watching the changes in the dying and dead body and, on one occasion bringing a skeleton into the house. After four years he left the school and became a painter of the cafés and music-halls of Madrid. It was then he began his close, almost morbid, study

Solana. *Carnaval en la Aldena*

of carnivals and ferias in particular the disguises and obscene gestures of the Burial of the Sardine.

Gradually he became more solitary. He spent long hours alone in the Prado, studying the masters of the Spanish school. He painted, but hid all his pictures away in his own rooms. Indeed, after 1904, his brother Manuel had to do all the work of sending the canvases to galleries and exhibitions, for Solana himself took no further interest in it.

In 1909 he went back to Santander, where in the sailors' cafés and fondas he found new models. He had friends also amonst the bullfighters, and even on one occasion appeared in the ring as one of the *cuadrillo* of the famous El Bombé, who had persuaded him the night before after a good many drinks to take up the profession. Meanwhile he was still totally unknown as an artist. (Even when his 'Regreso de la Pesca' won the first prize in the National Exhibition of 1922 hardly anyone knew who had painted it.) But this worried him not at all. 'I don't paint for exhibitions. I don't paint for anyone but myself.'

Nevertheless this was a period of black melancholy for Solana. There were many deaths amongst his family and one of his brothers became insane and had to be sent to an asylum in Santander.

In 1928 he went, for the first time, to Paris, accompanied by the faithful Manuel as an interpreter. By all accounts, his behaviour there was most characteristic. For in the Paris of the '20s where so many artists were untrue to themselves, Solana behaved as if he was in a small Spanish town. He refused to learn a word of French and wore all the time his heavy black boots and thick Sunday suit. In the evening, he would get into a taxi and simply give the direction 'A la fonda!' He saw no artists at all, except Picasso, who happened to call one day and praised everything he had done, in particular the series of bullfights. Meanwhile Manuel hired a gallery in the Faubourg St. Honoré for 12,000 francs and arranged an exhibition of twenty-nine pictures. But the prices asked were so high that very few were sold.

The Spanish love Solana for this proof of his incorruptibility, in the face of Picasso and the *afrancesamientos*. He returned to Madrid (without having visited the Eiffel Tower) and went on painting in the same manner as before. But fame travels in the end, however slowly. By 1938, when his third and last exhibition was held in Paris, his quality was recognised by the French public and the critics and he was hailed as a great religious painter. On this occasion Solana and his brother were both excited by the congratulations, and Solana, on being asked to autograph some drawings, could be seen handing them to Manuel—'You sign them, you sign them.' . . . 'But it's your signature they want; you're the painter.' . . . 'Nonsense, nonsense, it doesn't matter which of us does it.'

It is by no means easy to see Solana's pictures; most of them are in private collections, but there are several in the Museo del Arte Moderno in Madrid, and in 1945 his friend Sanchez Carmargo published a sumptuous volume of reproductions. Until there is an exhibition of his work in London, we must be content with these.

Anyone turning over the pages would be reminded at once of Edvard Munch and of Ensor, the Ensor of 'Skeletons Wanting to Warm Themselves'. The resemblance is one of subject, and with these painters one must not commit the vulgarity of pretending that the subject is unimportant. There are the same forceful, morbid and terrifying scenes, the obsession with death and illness, and with the ugliness of the human face and body which is treated with something like affection, the same crowds, organised as a living entity, the same misery in lonely bedrooms and frightening jollity in the streets, with masks and faces like masks, snouts uplifted and hollow darkness for eyes. To these Solana adds his favourite theme of dummies and mannequins and wax figures seen through glass windows. But it must be stated at once that, although he was a contemporary of Munch and Ensor, Solana neither knew nor cared anything about them. His genius developed in a world by itself. It was fully matured by the time he went to Paris in 1928.

The greatness of Solana—and it *is*

greatness—comes precisely from his limitations. He was not influenced by any modern movement. He studied El Greco, Zurbaran, Velazquez, Ribera, Goya and Bruegel; he was Spanish, and nothing else; he said of Spain that 'you ought to owe her everything, starting with your life.' He painted corridas, bulls with blood gushing out of their mouths, ferias, carnival masks and scenes of torture, not because he was derivative of Goya but because he *was* Goya, that is, he was a Spaniard of exactly the same kind, a narrator, a realist, and a self-tormentor. He confined himself to *pintura negre*, because he wished only to paint Spain, and he believed that the sunlight of Spain could not be painted at all.

And the comparison with Goya, though it must be made, does not extend to technique. Solana was, at heart, a sculptor, and the knockdown effect of his pictures is due, partly at least, to the amazing weight and solidity of his forms. They seem to jump out of the background like those jigsaws made for very small children where the men and animals can be lifted out whole. And indeed Solana's backgrounds are not landscapes; they are created simply to silhouette his figures. The light does not come from the sky, or from any definite source; it is spread evenly over the picture, so that the colours, the reds, the dark greens, olive greens, violets, ochres and charcoal blacks keep their own purity. It is impossible to describe, without a colour reproduction, the intense dark glow of this method of Solana's. One of the effects of it is that every figure is distinct, cut off and communicating only with itself in utter loneliness. This is true even in the 'action scenes', the bullfights and *ferias* where the crowd is treated as one vast animal. Most characteristic, too, is the placing side by side of living beings, dummies, masks and corpses, all handled alike, and showing not their differences but their similarities.

There is no space to write any more at the moment about Solana, but in a future number of *World Review* there will be a full-length study of his work. Meanwhile there are two other painters in Madrid who, if they were French, would certainly be well known over here—Frederico Cossio and Benjamin Palencia.

* * *

Criticisms are made of Cossio because he is favoured by the Government and is, indeed, the only good official artist they have to show. He has, in fact, made 'true to life' portraits of the Generalissimo and others in a very different vein from his serious work. But it would be very difficult to tell what Cossio was really thinking of at any time. He is a little, white-haired man of fifty-six, of irresistible charm, badly lame and deaf, hobbling about in a pyjama jacket and a pair of bedroom slippers. For his work in the Carmelite Church near the Plaza de Oriente, where he is painting two huge pictures, he changes into a better

Solana. *La Cupletista*

pyjama jacket. He has a smile of great sweetness which is, at the same time, rather sly and melancholy, as though he were preserving a secret which he enjoyed very much. His studio, high up in the crystal light of Madrid, has the air of a ship's cabin, with everything, including piles of unopened letters, put tidily away in lockers.

'I do not buy colours; I mix my own, like the ancients.' He opened a drawer and took out a handful of yellow crystals. It was mastic, sent by a friend from London, for it is difficult to get good materials in Madrid. At the same time, having been asked about some very fine white lines hatched across a portrait he was doing, he went into the bathroom and produced a short length of rubber which had probably been stopping a window. It was with the edge of this that he made the lines. 'Solana has painted the darkness of Spain. But you will notice that there is a good deal of sunshine also—there are a great many different things in Spain.'

Cossio himself, however, has since his days in the Academia San Fernando, always used an extremely low palette. His greatest admiration is for Rembrandt—'Rembrandt is my painter.' His greys are of the greatest subtlety, depending on the pinks, blues, and lemons of which they are composed. His problem, in his portraits and his exquisite still lifes, is one of light and space. In one recent still life which was propped against the wall of the studio, the light was concentrated among spectral lemons, forks and gourds on to one drinking glass which reflected it in a blinding flash. In the portrait of his mother at the Museo del Arte Moderno this light seems to be radiating from the hands, the hair and his mother's silver teapot.

Cossio's parents lived at Santander and he loved sailing as a boy. This has given him a rather unexpected passion for seascapes and shipwrecks, and it is more surprising still to find among his subjects two pictures which look like elegant ghosts of *The Fighting Temeraire* and *Ulysses Deriding Polypheme*. And that is just what they are. Cossio has studied Turner from reproductions in magazines and art books, and respects him as a master of light and atmosphere 'greater than the Impressionists'. But he has never seen a single original Turner in his life.

He is a spiritual and delicate painter of limited range, his limitations being the result of extreme discipline. He has created a poetic world which may, or may not, be to your taste. Where he is working out his own technical problems among shadowy human beings, scarecrow vessels at sea and subtle combinations of fruit and table-napkins, he might perhaps be compared to Victor Pasmore during his 'Flower Barrow' period. But Cossio has never heard of Pasmore or, indeed, of any modern English painter.

* * *

With Palencia we arrive at the other extreme, an artist who started out in the Van Gogh—Fauviste—Expressionist tradition and has developed in fierce seclusion. His 'Cabras en Los Chorrerones', painted in 1948, does not really give a fair idea of his palette, for in many of his landscapes and still lifes he uses a beautiful run of green, gold and ochre which is most characteristic of himself and his native country. But it does give an idea of his strength.

Palencia was born in 1900 in Barrax, which is in the middle of the plain of La Mancha, and he has a good deal of the generosity, obstinacy and idealism which must be natural to the districts. He, too, was a student at San Fernando (where he nearly came to blows in defence of El Greco) and began his career in Madrid. He was one of a group that included Lorca, Dali, Bores and Cossio, but while conversational fireworks and brilliant theories exploded all round him, he remained silent, appearing even a little old-fashioned and provincial. However, at the *Exposicion de Artistas Ibericas* in 1925 his pictures occupied an entire room and attracted a good deal of attention.

And then, as it seemed, everything faded away. The whole exciting and excitable new movement turned out to be a false alarm, and the leaders of it set out hot foot for Paris. Paris was the place; it had turned shabby, penniless Pablo Ruiz into Picasso, and Jose Gonzalez into Juan Griz, and it was, apparently, the one hope and only possibility for a self-respecting artist.

Cossio — *Portrait of his mother*

Solana — *Bodegon*

Palencia *Cabras en los chorrerones*

But Palencia, although he joined in the exodus and although he must have studied the work of Van Gogh and Matisse there, was not happy in Paris. He did not, in fact, feel happy anywhere in Europe until he reached Italy and saw the frescoes of Giotto. They had the effect of a revelation and he alarmed his friends by talking of Giotto as if he were still alive.

During the Civil War he did not paint at all. But when it came to an end, he became involved in a most curious experiment. He was living at this time (1941) in the little village of Vallecas, at the foot of the mountains. He attracted round him a crowd of boys, not much more than children, most of them derelicts of the war, who had lost their parents and become beggars or worse. He taught them to paint and prepare colours, speaking to them of painting as a mystery and 'showing them God, visible and tangible in the golden plains of Castile.' The boys were inspired with a kind of fanatical devotion to their master. They built a studio in a deserted hermitage, carrying and laying every stone with their own hands. They lived on chestnuts, bread and olive oil, sharing their food with the children from the village. They surmounted difficulties of an heroic scale, one of them painting a picture ten foot high with a water colour brush. On the top of Arabesa, a hill which rises out of the dusky plain like a mountain of the moon, they left a monument, a plain block of stone which read: 'I am the philosophers' stone and change painting into pure gold.'

The experiment lasted two years, and many of the muchachos are among the promising young painters of today. If you travel in the region of Vallecas, you will see written on the milestones, the rocks, and the walls of the posadas, inscriptions in large letters—GRECO GIOTTO PIERO DE LA FRANCESCA.

Today Palencia lives and works in a deserted windmill not far from Avila. He prepares his own colours (earth pigments, for it is his theory that nature can be recreated only in natural colours) and he has given up using not only commercial canvases, but brushes. He applies the paint with home-made tools, palette knives and wooden spatulas, in a desperate attempt to capture what he sees. Any talk of 'values' or 'passages' reduces him to even more than his usual silence. His colours are pure, not even mixed with oil, and he is not at all interested in the fleeting appearances of things. Impressionism is, in fact, amazingly ill-suited to this country where there are no impressions and no fleeting appearances, and the golden sun beats down all day on the golden rock.

In the windmill he has at last the peace and concentration that he has always wanted. (It was one of Solana's remarks that 'To be a good painter you should go to one of the villages where no one ever says anything except good-morning.') His models are the peasant children of the neighbourhood and his book of drawing *The Children of My Mill* is well worth having. But his true subject is the landscape of Castile, the dust-coloured hills, the golden cobbles and walls, the stones and olive-trees, and no other painter has ever known it as he has.

Though he talks so little, he writes a great deal, in a romantic vein, and, in particular, he writes the rhapsody of this chosen country: 'It is my greatest dream to paint these vast arid lands which rise up in their warmth towards the warm sun, to model the gigantic forms which are created for me by the face of the land of Castile which moves in straight lines and curves through space.'

The oval forms of the stones, the beautiful Castilian partridges, the straw baskets, the peasants lying down to rest in the noonday sun, against the rigid lines of the Escorial and the pointed mountains.

'I have struggled like an animal with the living material of my pictures. The smell of dust, the ecstasy of the stones, like the skeletons of fossil animals, have been poetry to me. More than once while I was trying to find the secret of those stones I have lost myself in the valleys and been alone with the grasshoppers and the cry of the partridge. I have felt my mouth grow rough and dry with thirst. I have heard the wolves howling among the flinty rocks which shelter the clay-walled villages: all things that I have tried to

carry into my pictures. My paintings of a scene immemorial through which I have walked with naked feet, feet scorched with the burning fire of the roads of Castile.'

* * *

Barcelona, rather than Madrid, is the place to find poets. But in the Calle Wellingtonia in the outer suburbs of Madrid (looking straight down on to the plains below) Vincente Alexandre is living in semi-retirement. Alexandre, who visited England last year, is the greatest living poet of Spain. His position is something like that of T. S. Eliot—it is unassailable from all sides. In the great Spanish flowering period of the thirties, Lorca represented the popular, gypsy or Arab romantic style, while Alexandre was the leader of the classic or literary movement. Here is a translation of his poem *Como el Vilano*.

COMO EL VILANO

Lovely is the Kingdom of love
But bitter also is the Kingdom.
It is because the lover's heart
Is bitter in the lonely hours apart
Watching the inaccessible cloud of air
He sees her eyes are there

The lover is born for happiness
For propagation everlasting
Which from his innermost heart unfolds
To lose itself for ever and ever
In the pure heart of love delivered

But the solicitous round of life
The nagging hours day by day
And that same airy cloud, and dreams
And the short flight of the young whom love inspires
All whisper against the duration of the impossible fires.

FERIA IN JAEN

October 18th was the date of the Feria in Jaen, a town founded by the Romans and lying within the ancient walls on the slopes of a rocky mountain, a town which, in any other country, might be a National Monument, but in among all the fantastic beauty of Spain passes as nothing out of the way. Jaen, however, does not have to concern itself with tourists, being an important market and a Bishopric and having its own clay pigeon shoot and a theological college.

To pass through the walls at the top of this steep and cobbled town, you pull a large iron bell (to warn the dogs) and go through the wall into a farmyard, where a man, together with some hens, lies fast asleep in the blazing sun. The yard turns into a yellow path cut out of the side of the hill, where down near the precious trickle of the river an untended vegetable patch, like the garden of Eden, produces Indian corn, squash, pimiento, beans, prickly pears and a few stalks of tobacco. Between the dip of the terraced hills planted with olives are the blue and hazy Sierra mountains. And from the theological college you can hear the distinct, cracked, and tinny note of the bell, and the students come bounding out in their long black cassocks, begin to play football, and fall down in a heap.

It was the night before the fair, and booths were being knocked up all along the Promenade de la Alameda, which leads out of the town. Most of them were covered mysteriously with sacking, and when it grew darker they were lighted from inside with bicycle lamps, silhouetting the occupants who were preparing to go to bed under the counters. Tomorrow's bullfighters had arrived at the hotel. Green branches (donkeys had been moving into Jaen all day loaded down under the greenery) were hung up in wreaths, and fairy lights were strung across the streets only to go out, like all fairy lights, and come on unexpectedly for a few glorious moments. The Feria in Jaen was, in fact, amateurish, so that even the shepherd who had arrived with his pipe to play tonadillas turned out to have had a drop too much and could only remember one tune. But, for enthusiasm, it did not yield even to Seville.

Between the piles of chestnuts and melons and the stalls of cheap jewellery, sweets and toys (with cascades of wooden

horses such as you see in Victorian pictures of the Burlington Arcade), the gypsies had arrived to begin cooking. Endless formations of doughnuts emerged from the scalding olive oil over charcoal stoves that made the air vibrate with heat. Meanwhile graceful Andalusian riders clattered through the fair in their Sunday best, with hard round grey hats set at a certain angle, and the same hats, in paper and cardboard, were humbly offered for sale on the pavements.

Down at the fun fair, at the more disreputable end of the fun fair, is the Museo Manolete. Manolete, admitted by all to be the greatest matador within living memory, is commemorated here. The exhibition is very popular, but the stifling number of people jammed into the little tent are, for the moment, hushed. In the corner the wax model of Manolete stands with glassy eyes and faded finery. The heavy gold embroidery of his jacket is tarnished and his pink stockings are wrinkled. Behind him are sets of photographs, repeated over and over, illustrating his dignified and modest bearing (this Roman dignity is supposed to be typical of Cordoba, his native city) and a *descabello superbo* from one of his famous fights.

But by far the largest part of the booth is taken up by the death of Manolete, which took place at Linares in 1947, when he was about thirty years old. A huge stuffed bull, itself pierced with a sword and with thick blood most realistically varnished on, transfixes Manolete through the groin from which red blood flows in torrents, while he, with the ghastliness of a waxwork, is for ever pinned in the agonies of the death blow. There is a painted backdrop of spectators who are pointing and removing their hats and grimacing in horror. This set piece has a definite effect and there is a murmur of sympathy. For no matter how used they are to the outcome of the *corridas*, still the Spanish crowds must feel that the great Manolete is, in a sense, their sacrifice, their blood sacrifice, offered as Abraham Lincoln was offered up by the Americans, nothing but the best being good enough for the expiation of the people.

The last exhibit is a waxen mask of Manolete on his deathbed in hospital. Under the coarse white sheet the body is much too small (for want of space) for the head, so that the yellowing wax mask dwarfs the bed and the tiny dummy feet.

It is a moment of horror which no one can avoid feeling once or twice in Spain, perhaps in front of Ribera's 'Bearded Lady of Naples', or perhaps in the Pantheon of the Escorial where Maria Louisa, the Queen of Philip IV, chose her future grave and scratched her name on it with a pair of scissors.

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Between the blood-streaked waxworks and the art of Solana and Goya, between the postcard of the Black Virgin and the surrealism of Dali, between the sacrificial pinks, yellows and reds of the bullfight and the colour of Palencia, there are links which are strong, and by no means invisible. The connection has been lost in England for a very long time. But it is the strength of Spanish art, as it is of Spanish music.

I hope in future numbers of *World Review* to publish full-length articles on Gaudi, Solana, and the Dali production of Don Juan, as well as on Spanish music since Falla. I have also arranged for studies of those two stupendous technical prodigies, Sert and Fortuny.

P. M. F. & D. F.

EMIGRATION AND DEFENCE

This article is based on the Eleanor Rathbone Memorial Trust Lecture delivered last month in London by Sir Norman Angell

SIR NORMAN ANGELL

If we had acted in the matter of the Fascist invasion of Abyssinia as the United States a quarter of a century later was to act on behalf of the United Nations in Korea, the Second World War would almost certainly have been averted.

This time lag of policy has a very direct bearing on the proposition I shall set forth. Let me recall one tragic illustration of that time lag. If the American public of 1920 had been prepared to accept under Wilson the degree of internationalism it did accept under Truman, there would have been no Second World War. For we have had not merely one, but many, opportunities in the past, of saving peace; and we failed to take any of them. We British have once more an opportunity of making without war an indispensable contribution to the defence of our inheritance, a type of civilisation embodying the things to which we attached supreme value—humaneness, freedom, the human status of women, the fullness of the individual life. Please do not misunderstand me. The contribution I shall suggest will not of itself suffice; but it is indispensable. I have often found discussion of policy bedevilled by confusion between what is necessary and what is enough. If a given factor is really indispensable, it is futile to waste time trying to establish whether it is more important than others. You cannot determine which of the legs of a three-legged stool is the most important; for if one is missing, the stool falls down; and that should suffice.

* * *

My thesis is this:

1. Unless relatively empty and undeveloped areas of the British Commonwealth, comprising Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Rhodesias, show in the near future a development of population and wealth comparable to that shown by the United States within the last seventy or eighty years, the Western democracies will not possess sufficient power to resist the expansive pressure of totalitarian societies, whose governments will use as instruments the great population masses of Russia, China, other parts of Asia, perhaps tomorrow India and much of Africa.

2. No development of the Dominions comparable to the development of the United States this last three quarters of a century can be hoped for without an immigration nearing the scale of that which alone has enabled the United States within one lifetime after the North and South war to grow from a country of thirty millions, racked, bled white by devastating civil and racial conflict, into the richest and most powerful nation of the world.

3. If a freer migration policy is to have its full effect in developing the resources of the Commonwealth and ensuring the security and economic welfare of Britain itself, there must be a progressively closer political integration of the Commonwealth, though not necessarily along the lines of the American Federation.

* * *

I have just mentioned certain periods—a lifetime, sixty, seventy years; and you may comment that long-term policies involving such periods can have little bearing on the tragically urgent aspect of today's situation. We may face the atomic annihilation of this city within a year or two. Our government is now urging us to take measures against that possibility, at once, without delay; to get out our tin

hats of ten years ago; to learn the new atomic A.R.P. code. In the face of this, you may ask, is it not unrealistic to discuss fifty-year policies?

Well, for one thing there is much of this policy of freer migration capable of relieving immediately the abject misery of many thousands of unhappy men and women.

But what we are likely to do, and be, ten or fifteen years hence, will affect today's behaviour of others towards us. It was the burden of Clemenceau's argument to Wilson in 1918: say now in 1918 that you will defend France if Germany attacks her and you will not have to do it, for Germany will not attack. Fail to say it and she will attack; you will have to fight in France's defence.

I am not in the secrets of the Kremlin, but it is no secret that Moscow hopes to achieve its purpose by the exploitation of the discontent, the hopelessness and the misery of the multitudes in Europe and Asia. The strategic areas in which that policy can—from the Kremlin's point of view—be most effective is in Germany and Italy. In the former of those countries there are probably between seven and ten million people, comparable to the entire population of Australia, who have been uprooted for one reason or another and who are dependent on charity in one form or another, are without settled homes, in large part without work, and in most cases without hope. The members are added to daily by those who escape from the Eastern Utopia.

But these homeless masses constitute a festering sore—raw material of Communism—and this aspect will get worse unless some hope, some chance of life anew be given them. Now in the bad old days of our grandfathers, in the days even of my own youth, these people would not have been without hope, without chance of new life. The problem of the displaced person is not new. Let me remind you of one aspect of the unhappy history of Ireland. During the nineteenth century famines in Ireland displaced half its population. Something in the neighbourhood of four million persons sought and found, often with most dramatic success, a new and abundant life in America. And to those four million Irish you have to add many more millions of displaced persons coming from Germany—especially after the German liberal movement of the mid-nineteenth century—from Italy, Poland, Russia, the Ukraine. I will give some figures presently, but first let me emphasise a strange paradox.

This generation—we proclaim with pride—is the generation of the Welfare State, of the planned society. We pride ourselves on having learned the technique of the thing. Our planning is scientific—terribly scientific. Our tools of production and use of mechanical power approach the miraculous, and we have annihilated distance; we can traverse in hours distances which in the nineteenth century took weary days, or even weeks. The other side of the world is now at our back door.

For some years now we have been confronted with this problem of the D.P. in Central Europe. Its most tragic and heart-breaking detail is the care of some half million or three quarters of a million persons. And we admit ourselves completely baffled. Legislation about it gets into terrific tangles. A Congressional Bill introduced a few years ago in the United States, designed to facilitate the admission of four hundred thousand immigrants at the rate of a hundred thousand a year, met such implacable opposition that it emerged in a form so mangled that the original purpose is all but completely defeated.

Yet half a century since, before the days of the Welfare State, of the Utopia, the planning, the restrictions and controls, the United States was admitting immigrants at the rate, not of a hundred thousand a year, but sometimes of a hundred thousand a month; doing it without planning, without elaborate welfare provisions, without indeed knowing that it was doing something which we, with all our social sophistication, are quite incapable of achieving. It would seem to indicate that one result of planning and control is to make impossible some at least of the purposes which would be quite possible if only we did not plan them.

Now I am not dealing here with some minor point of recent history of no social

and political significance to the tasks now confronting us. To the fact that the unrestricted immigration into the United States did take place, we owe the fact that we were able to defeat our enemy in two wars; were not compelled to follow France into the dark valley of surrender; and have hopes that we may be able to defend ourselves against the totalitarian darkness without war. The cause of the West would have been lost if the policy of free immigration into the United States had been defeated by its opponents in the early history of that country. Without the immigration, the United States which we now know could not have existed. That policy was opposed as early as the first decade of the nineteenth century in the United States.

In 1810 the population was slightly over seven million—not far off the present population of Australia. And at about that time there arose in the United States an anti-foreign, anti-immigration movement just as there was for so many years in Australia a strong anti-immigration sentiment, recently so remarkably changed. The immigration policy was opposed in America on several grounds: the population had more than doubled in twenty years; if increase was maintained at that rate, the country would soon be over-populated; and the influx of foreigners would swamp the native Americans—which in this case did not mean the American Indian—and submerge American institutions.

One of the influences defeating this movement—which constantly recurred—was the influence of the entrepreneurs who were shortly to be building railroads over the Eastern territory. These capitalists needed the Irish and other immigrants as a convenient form of labour. And one of the by-products of this use of the immigrant was to prove that a free European worker to whom wages were paid was a form of labour more economical than the negro slave. It was one of the factors which was to demonstrate even to the more intelligent Southerner whites that negro slavery had become uneconomic. And though in the Marxist jargon, which was shortly to grow up, the white workers came to be described as wage-slaves, it is worth notice that the Irish wage-slaves, in a generation or so, were to take over the government of a number of the American cities which grew up along the railroads the earlier Irish generation had built. Neither the Irish-American politician nor the Irish policeman of Chicago or New York could properly be described as slavish in his character or demeanour.

If we are to get any appreciation of what immigration has done for the United States—and might do in some corresponding degree for the Commonwealth—certain figures should be duly considered.

When I was born, the United States had a smaller population than Britain has today; and less than half the present combined population of Britain and the overseas Dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. At Lincoln's death the population of the United States, Confederate and Union States, negroes and whites combined, numbered little more than 30,000,000. It was a 30,000,000, moreover, inhabiting a country devastated by a murderous war, much of its best blood drained away in the enormous casualties, facing a bitter racial conflict still unresolved, and possessing a badly depreciated paper currency. Yet men born at that time were to live to see the 30,000,000 nation become one of nearly 150,000,000, enjoying the highest standard of life for the common man anywhere in the world or at any period of history; and able, over and above that, out of its surplus, to furnish aid to half a world in its need.

Consider the figures. In a little over the fifty years following the Civil War the country admitted over 33,000,000 immigrants; that is to say, a number in excess of the country's whole population at the beginning of that period. There were years—several—in which more than a million immigrants were admitted in the twelve months.

This immigration, on a scale which in our day of quotas, restrictions, controls, planning, would be regarded as disastrous and impossible, did not disrupt the receiving country's economy; it greatly benefited thereby, since this alone made

possible a rapid development of the country's natural resources. It did not lower the American standard of life, which rose steadily all the time. It did not swamp the country's distinctive culture or political institutions—it was the means by which the effective defence of those institutions, and of like institutions elsewhere in the world, alone became possible.

Now the supreme fact which should interest us of the Commonwealth in the achievement just described is that the thing was done on the basis of smaller territory than that possessed today by the Dominions of the British Commonwealth, and on the basis of resources far less. How it was done should interest us for the reason that there is no physical obstacle to our doing as much in as short a time. There are very serious obstacles; but they are obstacles of the mind, of the kind which arise from conceptions of nationalism, doctrinaire fanaticisms and the policies which arise therefrom; political short-sightedness, not obstacles of the external physical world—soil, climate, distances.

We fall too much perhaps into the habit of taking for granted the wealth and power of the United States which has enabled that country to do so much for so many. It is a case in which something in the order of six or seven per cent of the world's population brings aid to something in the order of sixty or seventy per cent, or more. (Aid has even extended in the recent past to both Russia and China as well as to the Western democracies.)

We seem too often to look upon this wealth and power as though they were natural phenomena, like Mont Blanc or Niagara Falls. One hears repeatedly the remark that, given her vast area and resources, it was inevitable that the United States should become the power she is, and presumably stand for the things she does. But there was no inevitability about it.

Russia and China (among others) possess greater potential resources: we do not look to them for aid in the defence of a free and humane civilisation. Most of the Western Hemisphere lies south of the Mexican border and is occupied by twenty-one separate republics. They are incapable of doing what the lesser area of the North occupied by one republic has done. The United States of Marshall Aid is not the outcome of material resource but of a political and social judgment which has so guided policies in the past that such resources as do exist have been turned to account; and, from our point of view, to the right account. That nation exists as we know it—and could not have existed otherwise—because certain men in periods of crises came to certain political conclusions, and struggled for the appropriate policies as against other men of contrary conviction. The outcome of the struggle, as the Alexander Hamiltons and the Lincolns would have testified, was, again and again, a very near thing indeed. There was very nearly no Union to begin with and its continuance demanded an appalling price.

Free immigration would have been unavailing as the source of the wealth and power that now aid us if the original thirteen colonies had followed the line of political development which the Latin American colonies, after they had achieved their independence from Spain, did follow, the line, namely, of each colony becoming an independent sovereignty with no common authority embracing all. Latin America has a population falling not far short of that of the United States, though occupying an immensely larger territory. But while one hundred and fifty million English-speaking Americans form one nation or one sovereignty, the hundred and thirty million Latin Americans are split into twenty-one separate republics, often at war with each other, and almost always so harbouring mutual fears and suspicions as to be unable to formulate a common policy. If what is now the United States had become a dozen or so separate sovereignties, it is fair to assume that those twelve separate nations would not have been able to furnish the prompt aid they are doing at this moment to the common defence of the West—not much more perhaps than Latin America has actually furnished or is now furnishing. There would have been no Marshall Aid.

The area and resources of that part of the British Commonwealth composed of Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New

Zealand, South Africa, and the Rhodesias comprise a combined area far greater than that of the United States and possess greater resources. But these dominions have not followed the federal line of development adopted by the original thirteen American colonies, but have followed more the line of setting up independent and separate sovereignties pretty much as the Spanish-American colonies did.

It is, however, of the essence of English political method that its constitutions are never static or stereotyped. They are almost always flexible, subject to modification in response to changing circumstance. For a century now, in the case of the overseas dominions I have mentioned, the tendency has set strongly towards complete independence. But under the stress of two world wars and their economic aftermath, the necessity of co-ordinating defence and economic recovery has brought them together, revealed the need of greater integration; and brought home the fact that a society made up of completely independent units is a contradiction in terms, and that a business partnership, based on the principle that each partner shall be free to do exactly as he sees fit about the conduct of the business, is not a partnership.

That need for closer integration will become more evident if the dominions are to draw their additional population mainly from the United Kingdom.

A considerable number regard this reduction of Britain's population as in itself desirable on the economic ground that Britain has passed her population optimum and on the military ground that the atomic danger demands dispersal of population; that the intense concentration of population in areas like that of London exposes the whole island to utter paralysis in the event of attack by atomic bomb, to say nothing of the danger from blockade to a large population dependent on imported food.

The issue is too complex to be argued exhaustively here. But there are serious countervailing considerations. One is time, and time is of the essence. You are not going to shift ten or fifteen million people from Britain to the other side of the Atlantic or Pacific in two or three years. The economic difficulties—transport, housing, capital equipment—are enormous. Greatly to reduce the population, and so her total wealth, would in many respects weaken Britain, make her of less weight both in European and world politics. Britain is the only great state in Europe without a considerable Communist party. In France, Germany, Italy, the Communist parties are electorally powerful. To weaken the one state of which this is not true is to weaken the potential capacity of the West as a whole to resist Communist internal penetration or external attack. We should do well to remember that on three occasions in the last hundred and fifty years the liberation of Continental Europe from the domination of totalitarian government has been achieved by the fact that Britain was able to hold out against the aggressor after Continental nations had been compelled to surrender. It is true, as I have insisted, that Britain could not have won the last two wars by herself, without American aid; but she could have lost it by herself, without American aid.

The weakening of Britain would matter less if the Commonwealth were a political and economic unit. It is neither. The significance of this can best be illustrated perhaps by an analogy.

When the American Middle West and Far West began to attract settlers, the Eastern seaboard lost some little of its then population (made good by later European immigrants). Farms in New England with houses and barns were actually abandoned and could at times be bought for the taxes due. But this did not represent loss to the United States as a whole because it remained an economic whole. The source of revenue which the Washington government lost in New England, it gained in Illinois and its total power to solve financial difficulties—at times very serious—was not diminished. The matter would have been very different if New England had been one independent state and Illinois (say) another, and there had been no Washington government at all, only the governments of separate

independent sovereignties, each bitten with economic nationalism, each claiming the right to erect such tariffs as it pleased against the others, each managing independently a separate currency, devaluating it sometimes without even consultation with the others—if that had been the situation, then the loss of population by Maine or Massachusetts to the Middle West would have been very serious indeed. As it was, when Massachusetts or Connecticut turned more to industry and less to its earlier agriculture, it could buy its raw materials in its own currency, whether it was the cotton of the South or the hides of the West, and sell the product without let or hindrance to the newly-peopled Middle West or Far West. What the optimum population of the area we call New England might be was really determined mainly by its political relationship to the other states of the Union. Had New England been as independent as Guatemala, or Honduras, or Eire, its optimum population would be but a fraction of what it can be when it makes an indissoluble economic and political part of the American Union. Similarly, the optimum population of *Old* England will depend upon its political relationships, first of all perhaps to the Commonwealth. Closer Commonwealth integration will not prevent co-operation with the European Continent, though it may alter its form. It is easier for Europe, and much more advantageous, to deal with one American Union than it would be to deal with Pennsylvania, Texas, California and three dozen other states separately. In fact, of course, there could have been no effective or worth-while co-operation unless Washington could speak and act for the forty-eight. There is no Washington of the British Commonwealth.

Need I say that I do not suggest that there exists or can exist an exact parallel. I am aware that many considerations, including the possibility of blockade, enter in. What I am suggesting is that American experience points up certain political and economic truths we would do well to take into account. And the greatest of these is political unification. Only the other day Mr. Paul Hoffman emphasised it very strikingly. If in this time when only increased productivity of the individual can save us from inflation, enable us to re-arm, and maintain the standard of life, the individual American worker produces two and a half times as much as the individual British workman, it is not because the American is the better man but because the United States with its hundred and fifty millions is an economic unit, a single market making possible not merely large-scale production with its advantageous use of mechanical power, but making possible the assembly of capital necessary. One of the problems which confront us in adapting large-scale emigration to the conditions of our time is the provision of capital equipment. The United States is an economic unit—because it is a political one. The economic magnitude of the United States is an outcome of its political unification.

Now one of the secrets which the Kremlin is unable to keep behind the Iron Curtain is the fact that its strategy, like that of all dictatorships, is based on the principle of divide and conquer; upon the conviction that if it can divide its victims, its victory over them is certain. And there is, of course, all too much evidence of the tendency of Western nations towards disunity, disintegration: disunity based in the international sphere on rival nationalisms and in the national sphere on doctrinal and party fanaticisms. Without these allies the Kremlin could not possibly have utilised over half the world a disciplined fanatical minority to subjugate a divided, indifferent, ill-disciplined majority. This conviction is merely part of the Communist creed that the tendency for free societies to disintegrate is demonstration of the inability of men in the mass to govern themselves; proof that they must always be governed by a disciplined minority. If now we of the Commonwealth prove ourselves incapable of duplicating by increasing unification the economic and political record of the United States, that Kremlin belief will be strengthened, and the pressure of Moscow in Asia and elsewhere will be continued. If, on the other hand, we can show that we can at least do with our heritage as well as the

Americans have done with theirs, then, sooner or later, the effort of the Kremlin in this respect will be abandoned. But our effort will have to include larger immigration into the dominions; and that in its turn will demand for its success a greater measure of political consolidation.

One consideration in all this will have occurred to you: it is not for us in Britain to give advice to the Dominions either about their immigration policies or the form and degree of their co-operation with us. But it is now they who raise these questions, and we who have to give the answer.

There has been within the last year or two in the larger Dominions a complete change of view as to the desirability of larger immigration. Whereas previously public opinion as a whole was opposed to anything more than a mere trickle of immigrants, there is now a very general feeling that, given the development in South East Asia, a larger population may be a matter of life and death for Australia and New Zealand, and Canada realises that her best resources—more coming to light every month or two, like the iron deposits of Labrador—demand more people for their exploitation.

What I have been mainly concerned to show in the light of past experiences is that we can at this stage serve the best interests of humanity and our own by giving to the sorely stricken of the Continent the opportunity of new life and new hope; and by doing it on a much larger scale than we have seemed disposed to do up to the present.

No one, of course, can study this subject seriously without coming up against the difficulties, very largely difficulties of finding capital for transport, housing, equipment, training, at a time when rearmament and enlarged social services are competing for all available resources. The Dominion governments concerned fear greatly the added financial burdens—as much in the added costs of social services as in other expenditures—which mass immigration would involve. A year or two ago quite a large number of emigrants from this country returned from one of the Dominions because, as they explained, they found the housing shortage as bad there as here.

This report provoked a reflection. Is it quite out of the question for us, in certain cases at least, to bye-pass some of the complexities involved in the modern welfare state and to return to the simplicities of an earlier generation, to which I happened to belong?

Talking once to a group of young men, I took that story of the return of emigrants from New Zealand because of the housing shortage as a text and put this question: What would have happened if the men who first went to New Zealand, or for that matter, Canada or Massachusetts or Virginia, had returned because of the housing shortage? It was certainly severe. There were no houses at all. That is why, in a sense, the emigrants went there. They went to build houses, for themselves first and for others later. And if they had not been willing so to do, there could have been no United States, no New Zealand.

May I introduce at this point a personal note to illustrate what I am suggesting.

At seventeen years of age I ran away from a Continental University to emigrate to America. It was a somewhat sudden decision. All I had to do to carry it into effect was to buy a ticket to New York. I had no passport, no exit permit, no visas, no number on a quota, and none of these things was asked for on my arrival in the United States. I landed with as little difficulty as one might land from the Isle of Wight ferry. I made my way West, became a farm hand, graduated to cowpunching, thence to haulage work with wagon and mules; took up land, bought timber for a house which I built with my own hands, helped by neighbours who had built theirs in the same way. And I was one of millions from the old world going to the new who did just that thing. It was the thing they wanted to do, and the doing of it brought life to them, and power and wealth and prosperity to the land in which they did it.

I am told that such a method is today out of the question. Perhaps it is. But when I recall that the freedom which permitted the doing of it in my youth did not produce chaos or disorder, but a far more stable

world than that which exists today, I wonder whether the net result of the ever-increasing controls and power of the welfare state will not be to deprive some millions of the very welfare which they seek so ardently.

These millions with whom we are concerned do not ask a life of luxury or even security. They ask for life, and the opportunity to shape it by their own efforts—to make their own niche, to build their own homes—it may be as the nineteenth-century pioneers built theirs, out of the sods of the plains or the timber of the forests, in some new country.

Without at least the chance to do those things, these displaced millions may become—let me repeat—a festering sore in the new Germany now arising. But they might become for the Commonwealth what others similarly situated in the nineteenth century became for the United States—a source of wealth and strength and political power for the democracies which receive them; a means of developing undeveloped resources, resources which remain sterile without the labour to work them.

It is some years now since I suggested that if we of the Commonwealth decide that we cannot do what our forbears did, cannot duplicate with our larger resources what the Americans have done so recently with smaller resources, then we may also be deciding that Western civilisation cannot be defended against the alien and hostile forces which now challenge it.

LATE SUMMER

Now Summer has been and gone, and we
Have hardly noticed it. The season's signs,
Full-bosom berries in the hedge
And seas of mist smothering the trees,
Bring death a little closer. I had thought
To watch late Summer ripen into red,
And red to gold; and only then the leaf
Gently to fall, completed, at my feet.

And youth has been and gone, and we
Have hardly noticed it. Once the green lanes
Ran off the map, ecstatic, of no age
But timeless. Sunlit, the clustered elderberries
Hung like black pearls that a kingdom had bought
For an empress's ear. Then boys' feet trod
Winged over thistles, there was no grief
To anchor them down. Dawn came too late.

By hours for one who had to be
In a hundred places by nightfall, inns
Of delight, cowbyre or sheltering sedge
Where a whistle puzzled the world, and cries
From the door went unanswered. Yet the light
That evenly shone on those years is dead;
What seemed without end then was so brief,
No more than a child's sharp cry in the night.

HENRY TREECE

THE DEATH OF MAXIM GORKY

G. F. HUDSON

THE biographers of Maxim Gorky have to make up their minds how he died. At the time of his death in June 1936, it was supposed to be natural. Then in 1938, at the third of the three great show trials of Old Bolsheviks in Moscow, the former head of the Soviet secret police, Yagoda, and two doctors confessed to having murdered him by 'medical' means on instructions from 'the anti-Soviet bloc of Rights and Trotskyites'. This confession lies under the suspicion which attaches to all the confessions made in these Soviet trials, and it thus remains in doubt whether the great Russian writer, the last of the major literary personalities of pre-revolutionary Russia, died a natural death, or whether he was in fact murdered.

The mystery may perhaps never be solved with certainty, but there is more ground for forming a judgment about it today than there was in 1938. Thanks to the testimony of Stypulkowski, the Polish underground leader who was put into the Moscow show trial of 1945 and later escaped from Poland, we are now much better informed about the production methods of Communist show trials than we were before the Second World War. With this increased knowledge it is possible to make more valid inferences about the truth or falsehood of particular allegations in the trials than it was when most people who were not fellow-travellers merely guessed that the confessions were phoney, but could not see how they were constructed.

It is a mistake to suppose that such confessions in general must be either true or completely false. An example which can be checked from independently available knowledge is Krestinsky's confession that on Trotski's instructions he made a secret agreement with the German Reichswehr 'to create a number of espionage bases in the territory of the U.S.S.R. by permitting the unhindered entry of spies sent by the Reichswehr' in return for an annual subsidy to be paid to the Trotskyite 'counter-revolutionary organisation'. It is now well known that between the wars the Reichswehr had a secret agreement with the Soviet Union for the training of selected German officers in Russia in the use of weapons forbidden to Germany by the Treaty of Versailles, and that this arrangement even continued for over a year after Hitler had come to power in Germany. The understanding was concluded and maintained as a policy of the Politburo, including Stalin himself, and was in no way part of a Trotskyite plot; the German officers came to Russia not as spies, but to be trained by the Red Army, and the money paid by the Reichswehr was for the expenses of their training. Thus Krestinsky was telling the truth when he referred to the existence of such an agreement, but he completely distorted its character and purpose when he represented it, not as an act of the Soviet Government, but as a device of anti-Stalin conspiracy. By so doing, he served two aims of the prosecution in the trial of 1938. In the first place he added one more to the list of the alleged crimes of the Trotskyites. Secondly, he cleared Stalin of responsibility for the pro-German policy which the Kremlin had pursued up to 1935. The training of German officers at Red Army camps had been widely rumoured in Russia, but by 1938, when all official propaganda was projecting the menace of German aggression, this past record was embarrassing to the Government and badly needed explaining.

Bearing in mind this analogy, we may

turn to the story of the murder of Maxim Gorky as told at the same trial. It should be explained in connection with this story that in Russia the leaders of the Communist Party and the writers and scientists close to the Kremlin do not choose their own doctors, but have doctors assigned to them by a special branch of the Kremlin administration; medical men thus selected must be not merely eminent in their profession, but irreproachable from a political point of view, though they need not be—indeed had better not be—members of the party. Three of these doctors, named Levin, Pletnev and Kazakov—a fourth accused, Vinogradov, died during interrogation—confessed to have murdered by incorrect medical treatment calculated to cause death of four persons—Maxim Gorky himself (the last in point of time), his son Maxim Peshkov, Menzhinsky who had preceded Yagoda as head of the secret police, and Kuibyshev, a member of the Politburo. They declared that they had carried out these murders of their patients on the instructions of Yagoda, who, as chief of the O.G.P.U. (subsequently transformed into the N.K.V.D., now the M.V.D.), threatened death to themselves and their families if they refused. They declared that the motive for getting rid of Maxim Gorky, as told to them by Yagoda, was Gorky's loyalty to Stalin and the fear of the Trotskyites and Bukharinites (the Rights) that he would publicly oppose them if they came to power by a *coup d'état*. Yagoda himself and several others of the accused confirmed this account.

It must be emphasised that it was not a matter of establishing responsibility for cases of murder which had previously remained unsolved. The four deaths had occurred at various dates from May 1934 to June 1936, but up to the time of the trial in March 1938 there had been no public suggestion that they had been anything but natural. If these deaths were not natural, they were 'perfect' murders in that they aroused at the time no suspicion that murder had been committed. At the trial the methods of 'treatment' used were described in great detail, and expert medical witnesses were called to confirm that they would have had fatal effects. No indication was given, however, to show how it had been discovered in the first place that the apparently natural deaths had really been brought about by intention.

* * *

With regard to the political motive for killing Gorky, it must be recognised that whoever had an interest in getting rid of him needed to do it by means which would not arouse suspicion of murder, because the esteem in which he was held both in Russia and abroad was so high as to make it inexpedient to suppress him by any overt action. The conversion of Gorky to approval of the Soviet régime had been one of the greatest propaganda triumphs of the Communists, but he remained a man of independent judgment who could not be muzzled except at great political risk. He had for more than a decade after the Revolution lived in Italy and been a hostile critic of the Bolshevik dictatorship; in 1928, however, he had become reconciled to it and had returned to Russia, where he was highly honoured and became a personal friend of Stalin. According to the prosecution at the trial of Yagoda and the doctors, this was the reason for the Opposition plot to kill him. Yagoda testified:

'For a long time the Joint Centre of the Right and Trotskyite organisation had endeavoured to influence Gorky and make him sever his close connections with Stalin . . . But no real results were achieved. Gorky remained faithful to Stalin and was an ardent supporter and advocate of his line. As the overthrow of the Stalin leadership and the seizure of power by the Rights and Trotskyites was being considered seriously, the centre could not ignore the exceptional influence of Gorky within the country and his prestige abroad. If Gorky remained alive, he would raise his voice in protest against us . . . Having become convinced that Gorky could not be severed from Stalin, the Joint Centre, therefore, had to decide to do away with Gorky.'

The emphasis here is on Gorky's devotion to Stalin. A different account of Gorky's relations with Stalin during the last months of his life is, however, given by

that unique document for the inner history of the Soviet internal crisis of 1936, *The Letter of an Old Bolshevik*. The name of the writer of this letter has never been revealed, but the highly reputable London publishers who printed it took great trouble to assure themselves of its authenticity, and there is no doubt that it was the work of someone with extensive inside information. It was written just after the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial of August 1936 and therefore at a time when Gorky's death was still supposed to have been due to natural causes. According to *The Letter of an Old Bolshevik*, Gorky had worked for a reconciliation between Stalin and his opponents in the party and for a time had succeeded in mitigating Stalin's attitude towards them. But against him worked the influence of Yezhov, an official of the Party Secretariat who had a genius for exploiting the suspicious and vindictive side of the Leader's character. When Kirov was assassinated in December 1934, Yezhov urged that Zinoviev and Kamenev should be put to death, on the ground that their political influence had been a contributory cause of the crime, though no direct complicity could be proved. Even among Stalin's close supporters, however, there were some who were unwilling to agree to death sentences on men who had been among the original leaders of the Bolshevik Revolution: Stalin hesitated and Zinoviev and Kamenev were merely given long prison sentences. But early in 1935 Stalin appears to have made up his mind to take extreme measures against the Opposition, and as a result he became estranged from Gorky:

'Gorky . . . tried desperately to stop Stalin from taking the road of revenge . . . All Gorky's efforts were unsuccessful, however. Stalin stopped visiting him and did not answer the telephone when he rang. Things went so far that an article by Zaslavsky against Gorky appeared in *Pravda*, a thing hitherto impossible. The initiated knew that Zaslavsky had written this article on the direct instructions of Yezhov and Stetzky . . . Gorky was furious, and things reached such a pitch that he demanded a passport to go abroad. This was categorically refused him. No severer measures were taken; he was, after all, Gorky, whom one could not simply remove from a job or cast aside.'

* * *

Both the Opposition and the Leader, therefore, had possible motives for killing Gorky, the former because he might protest against a hypothetical seizure of power, the latter because he was actually resisting the project for exterminating the Opposition which was subsequently carried out. The doctors, on the other hand, had no motives of their own for killing Gorky or anyone else. According to their own confessions at the trial, they acted only from fear of Yagoda. Levin had been physician both to Gorky and to Yagoda's wife, and had received various marks of favour from Yagoda, including the gift of a country house and exemption from Customs duties on returning from trips abroad—mere trifles in the power of a Soviet police chief to confer on his friends, but highly gratifying to the recipient. Then one day early in 1933, according to Levin's story, Yagoda told him that Maxim Gorky's son, Maxim Peshkov, 'brought undesirable and harmful people' to his father's house and that it was therefore necessary that he be 'removed'. He ordered Dr. Levin to accomplish this, saying to him:

'You are aware who is talking to you, the head of what institution is talking to you. You know that I am responsible for the policies of the Party and for the lives of the most important leaders of the Party . . . and therefore, since it is necessary for the interests of Alexei Maximovitch (Gorky) that his son be put out of the way, you must not hesitate before this sacrifice . . . Have in mind that you cannot help obeying me, you cannot get away from me.'

In another passage of the trial record Levin testifies:

'I loved Alexei Maximovitch very much and considered him one of the greatest men of our country and the whole world. How could I sink to this? . . . I am a man who is remote from politics, a non-Party man. Wrongly, perhaps, but I was dazzled by the power of the representative of the O.G.P.U.; he seemed to me to be an omnipotent person, in whose hands a

tremendous amount of power was concentrated. And if this man said that I must do this, then I did it. Psychologically, I explain it by a sort of cowardice—not for my own life, that I say in all sincerity. What frightened me most was his threat to destroy my family. And my family is a good working Soviet family.'

The other two doctors gave substantially the same account of their submission to Yagoda's threats. At no point in the trial did the Public Prosecutor (Vyshinsky) deny that Yagoda had had the power, as head of the Soviet secret police, to 'destroy' an innocent man and his entire family for refusing to carry out his orders to commit murder. For years, Yagoda, as Stalin's henchman in charge of the police apparatus, had wielded such arbitrary powers of life and death, and now that Yagoda had fallen from grace and himself faced death after prison interrogation and confession, the same powers were wielded by Yezhov as his successor. But on one point the three doctors gave no satisfactory explanation of their behaviour; they could not explain why they had failed to inform against Yagoda. For Yagoda, however powerful, was not the absolute ruler of Russia; he was the servant of the Leader. Except, therefore, on the assumption that the Leader approved of Yagoda's orders, it was to be expected that he would call Yagoda to account if he learnt what was going on. The four doctors who were being threatened by Yagoda were not helpless provincials with no way of appealing to the highest quarters except through O.G.P.U. channels; they were doctors of the Kremlin itself and had among their patients men in the immediate entourage of Stalin through whom information could be transmitted without Yagoda being able to intercept it. That none of the doctors attempted to inform against Yagoda can only be explained on the assumption that they believed Yagoda to be acting on the Leader's behalf, so that no appeal against his menaces was possible.

At the beginning, if we are to accept Levin's story, Yagoda gave no hint that his activity was hostile to Stalin. But after Levin had carried out, or arranged, the murders of Maxim Peshkov and Menzhinsky, Yagoda is alleged to have summoned him and said: 'Well, now that you have committed these crimes, you are entirely in my hands and you must agree to what I shall now propose—something much more serious and important.' Yagoda then went on to explain that a *coup d'état* was being prepared against Stalin by a group of conspirators headed by Rykov, Bukharin and Yenukidze, that he, Yagoda, was secretly working in alliance with them, and that it was to help them that Levin must now arrange to kill Maxim Gorky himself.

This part of the story is quite incredible. If Levin and the other doctors had already committed two murders on Yagoda's orders, they had, of course, on the familiar principle of blackmail, put themselves even more in his power than they had been at the outset. But if Yagoda revealed to them that the purpose of his orders was to facilitate the overthrow of Stalin, he put himself in *their* power, and it is not conceivable that he should have done such a thing. The historian is entitled to assume that Yagoda was an intelligent man in his own field of work; no fool could have risen to the top of the Soviet secret police, as he did, in the years of stress between 1928 and 1936. He must have been aware that his hold on the doctors depended on their belief that Stalin stood behind him. He had already compelled them to obey him, and now that they had done so, they were under an even greater compulsion; he did not need to give them any reasons for his orders beyond a vague assertion that it was all in the interests of the State. Instead of this, we are asked to believe that he, a man who had spent his life in revolutionary underground and police work, revealed to his unwilling instruments not only the fact of an anti-governmental conspiracy, but also the names of its ringleaders. What assurance could he have that the doctors would not betray the plot, once they knew that Yagoda's commands did not have the endorsement of the Leader? Yagoda could not have prevented them from informing against him and could not even have carried out his threatened reprisals, for any attempt to do

so, once Stalin's attention had been called to the matter, would be proof of the truth of their denunciation.

The doctors, therefore, were certainly lying when they declared in court that they had been told that Maxim Gorky's death had been decreed by the Joint Centre of Rights and Trotskyites. It does not follow, however—though it is possible—that the whole story of the murders was an invention. The reason which the doctors gave for their alleged submission to Yagoda, the threat of extermination to their families, was just as applicable to them when they had been arrested and were being prepared for trial under the direction of Yezhov. This pressure could be used either to make them confess to a story entirely fabricated by the police or to make them distort the story of murders which they had actually committed. Psychologically, the latter alternative is the more probable. From what is known of the technique used by the Soviet secret police to produce propaganda-pointed confessions in show trials, it is clear that the physical means (deprivation of sleep, strong lights and exhausting interrogation) and the use of promises and threats do not fully account for the astonishing zeal of prisoners in their own self-accusation in open court. The ultimate key is a psychological break-through by which the operator is enabled to exploit an inner conflict or sense of guilt deep in the mind of his victim. Most politicians, however loudly they may profess an absolute conviction of the rightness and wisdom of the policies they pursue, have inner doubts about them, particularly when they have been defeated and feel that their cause is lost; thus they are open to 'conversion' if the right psychological approach is employed. But for a doctor unconcerned with politics and accused of the abominable crime of murdering a patient, the issue is clear-cut; he has either done it or he has not. If the doctors had been entirely innocent, it would probably have been unsafe from the point of view of the prosecution to produce them in open court, even if, to save their families, they had signed confessions in the preliminary interrogation. But if they had actually committed the murders, even under compulsion, their sense of guilt would be sufficient to ensure their confessions in court with such minor modifications as the prosecution might require. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the medical murders are described in most convincing detail, in striking contrast to the extreme vagueness of certain episodes in the Moscow trial confessions which have been proved to be untrue—such as Pyatakov's alleged journey to Oslo to meet Trotsky in December 1935.

* * *

But if Maxim Gorky was murdered by his doctors on Yagoda's instructions, the final question remains: who gave the orders to Yagoda? Though he certainly would not, for the reasons already given, have revealed it to the doctors, it is still possible that he was in fact secretly working with anti-Stalin conspirators. On the other hand, it cannot but be reckoned a striking coincidence that the vast massacre which wiped out the great majority of the older generation of Russian Communists, having been delayed for more than a year and a half after the assassination of Kirov, was launched within two months after the death of Gorky. Again to quote from *The Letter of an Old Bolshevik*:

'Gorky's influence had greatly fallen after the second Kamenev trial (in the spring of 1935), but his star had not set altogether; there was an outward reconciliation between him and Stalin, and he remained until his death the only person whom Stalin was compelled to take into consideration, to some extent at least. It is possible that, had Gorky lived, the August trial (in which Zinoviev, Kamenev and others were sentenced to death) might have had a different dénouement. Be that as it may, it is certain that Gorky's death finally untied the hands of those in Stalin's immediate entourage who demanded haste in the contemplated crucifixion.'

The writer of these words regarded Gorky's death as an accident. Had he thought it was other than an accident, he might have wondered whether it was not the work of those who planned the extermination of all the elements in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union opposed to the autocracy of Stalin.

PIETER BRUEGEL'S ADORATION OF THE KINGS

CHARLES JOHNSON

THOSE who have a preconceived idea of what a religious picture ought to look like are apt to be shocked by Bruegel's 'Adoration of the Kings'. Some sort of shock was probably intended by the painter, though his precise meaning and purpose have been variously interpreted and still remain largely enigmatic.

By 1564, the date on the picture following Bruegel's signature, the tradition was firmly established that the wise men (mentioned only by St. Matthew), who saw the Star in the East and brought gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh to the Child Christ, were kings. This is based on the texts in Isaiah lx, 3: 'Gentiles shall come to thy light and kings to the brightness of thy rising', and in Psalms lxxii, 10: 'The kings of Tarshish and the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.' By the sixteenth century their names were established as Caspar, king of Tarsus; Melchior, king of Arabia and Nubia; and Balthazar, king of Saba. Usually Caspar represented old age and brought gold to symbolise that Christ was King; Melchior representing manhood brought frankincense because Christ was God; and Balthazar, representing youth, brought myrrh because He was Man and would die. In Bruegel's picture, however, the oldest king brings myrrh, the second gold, and the third, the negro, frankincense. In fifteenth-century German, Flemish and Dutch pictures, Balthazar is often a moor or negro, and this motif is occasionally borrowed by the late fifteenth, and early sixteenth-century Italians.

Italian painters of the Renaissance, especially after Gentile da Fabriano painted his 'Adoration' (now in the Uffizi) in 1423, were fond of representing the kings as followed by a vast retinue of courtiers, thus turning the scene into one of pageantry. The less aristocratically-minded painters of the Netherlands often allowed the Magi only a few retainers or even left them unattended. Roger Van der Weyden (*c.* 1399–1464) in his 'Adoration' at Munich gives them a following of only five. Memling (active 1465, died 1494) in his 'Adoration' of 1479 at Bruges omits the retainers, but includes donors. Geertgen tot Sint Jans (active 1465, died *c.* 1495), the author of the exquisite 'Nativity' by night in the National Gallery, painted three pictures of the 'Adoration of the Kings', in all of which Balthazar has a black face. In his 'Adoration' at Prague, as in the others, the retainers are fairly numerous, but arrive at Bethlehem by slow degrees, leaving gaps

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Detail from the *Numbering at Bethlehem*

Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Gallery and of the Brussels Art Gallery

between the members of the procession. The kings' reverence makes them all a little awkward, so that, splendidly attired though they are, they do not make an impression of pomp. The delicately-detailed, yet airy, landscape background, full of charm in itself, also suggests the great distances that they have travelled.

The painter of the Netherlands who influenced Bruegel most (though he died thirty-five years before the first record of the latter's activity) was Hieronymus Bosch.

Bosch's 'Adoration of the Kings' of about 1495 in the Prado at Madrid, in spite of its characteristic eccentricities, inspires, and is inspired by, a spirit of quiet reverence. Exactly why one of the king's attendants should be partly undressed and should have a bird's-nest in his head-dress may be a puzzle; the exact meaning of the skirmishing horsemen in the middle distance may be unclear; but the relation of the fantastic city in the background to the drama in front of the stage is both imaginatively and formally convincing (perhaps even more so because of the inconsistency of the eye-level); and sympathy is as much aroused for the stillness and shyness of the kings as for the even more timid shepherds, who have remained behind to peep at the scene through holes in the broken wall or gaps in the thatched roof. Most shy of all is St. Joseph, who is sheltering in the corner of a distant building, occurring in one of the wings of the altar-piece devoted to SS. Peter and Agnes and the donors.

Shy reverence is the last quality of which the *dramatis personae* in the 'Adoration of the Kings' by Pieter Bruegel, the Elder (active 1551, died 1568) can be accused. All the persons in this picture, even including the Mother and Child and St. Joseph, are literal unidealised renderings of types that the painter must have seen and by no means admired in Antwerp or Brussels or the villages near them. They have been called caricatures; but the degree of exaggeration and distortion is so slight that one is forced to accept each face and figure as only too credible, and only too like the faces and figures to be met with today. Here Bruegel differs from Bosch, who frequently carries distortion beyond what can be believed.

In Bruegel's 'Adoration of the Kings', the Mother and Child are coarse in type, St. Joseph, though trying to keep up his dignity, listens eagerly to the gossip (probably scandal) that his friend pours into his ear: the first king is senile; the second diseased, starved and unwashed; the negro king (though upright and vaguely reminiscent of Bosch's Balthazar in his picture in the Prado) almost imbecile with astonishment, and the other members of the crowd, inconveniently pressing into the confined space of the stable, have each their failing: apathy, idle curiosity, irascibility, muddle-headedness, sensuality, lazy good nature or low cunning.

All this, especially when the miseries of the inhabitants of the Low Countries caused by the Spaniards to whom they were subject are remembered, makes it not surprising that the picture has been regarded as a satire on religious art, painted as a deliberate affront to the orthodox Roman Catholics of Spain.

There is, however, no proof that Bruegel ever ceased to belong to the Church of Rome, but every proof in such a picture as his 'Massacre of the Innocents' at Vienna that he detested the Spanish army of occupation.

The impression made by his 'Adoration of the Kings', that Bruegel's attitude towards religion was wholly satirical, is modified when his other religious pictures are studied. They show him to have had an unquestionable if unconventional sympathy with his subject. His small 'Death of the Virgin' in grisaille (formerly in the possession of Viscount Lee of Fareham) is as human and touching as a Rembrandt, in the vividness with which he has realised the silent crowd, jostling at night into the untidy lamp-lit room with low rafters, and especially in the portrayal of St. John who is fast asleep and snoring, worn out with the task of nursing.

Even more powerfully original is his large 'Journey to Calvary' of 1564 at Vienna, conceived as a huge panorama, or his smaller 'Crucifixion' at Antwerp, where the drama is set in even vaster Alpine surroundings. In both of these and in the 'Numbering at Bethlehem' (Brussels) the theme is the isolation of the individual to whose sufferings his neighbours are utterly indifferent, making him feel far more deserted than if he were alone with

Nature. In the 'Journey to Calvary' gleams of sun and dark clouds alternate above a wide stretch of undulating country, over which a large irregular crowd is hurrying, each anxious to obtain the best view of the thrilling execution, just as the painter's compatriots must have been when scenes of torture were public and frequent. Almost incidental, though in the foreground of the picture, is the group of the fainting Mother of Jesus, the supporting St. John and two weeping Marys; almost lost in the crowd a long way back can be found the figure of the Saviour, fallen under the weight of the Cross. Bruegel, by inverting the usual dramatic methods, has here shown himself all the more originally and powerfully dramatic.

Such illustrations by Bruegel of Christian themes suggest that his attitude in painting the 'Adoration of the Kings' had other elements in it besides the satirical. He must have seen quantities of pictures by the Antwerp mannerists preceding him and contemporary with him, in which an unreal and almost escapist sweetness was the aim, as in two 'Adorations' in the National Gallery, that by Mabuse (active 1503, died *c.* 1533) of about 1507, and that by Gerard David (active 1485, died 1523). Mabuse's picture is static and lifeless for all its superb craftsmanship, and David's (a late work of about 1510–20) is softly atmospheric, but mechanical, timid and verging on prettiness in the derogatory sense (as his early work is not). Bruegel must also have seen many works by Antwerp mannerists nearer in date to his own, in which Italian characteristics least easily digested by the Netherlandish mind were uncomprehendingly imitated, resulting in the badly-proportioned Renaissance building, the slender figure of pseudo-aristocratic bearing, the nude figure ill at ease, or worse, as in Frans Floris's 'Last Judgment' of 1550, the groups of nude figures in would-be Michelangeloesque attitudes.

All these tendencies and affectations Bruegel must have loathed. There is good evidence that he visited Italy in the early fifteen-fifties; but he was entirely uninfluenced by the Italian concept of human dignity, human beauty and the grandeur of man's achievements. The only phenomena which he felt to be grand were natural phenomena—mountains, skies, trees, fields, rocks, rivers and the sea. Yet, except in his small 'Seascape' at Vienna, he never omitted human beings from his pictures; in all his landscapes his theme is Nature in relation to man, whether that relation be helpfulness, opposition or indifference. Moreover, men, especially the peasants of his native country, Flanders, and Brabant, absorbed and fascinated him. Dr. Nicolaus Pevsner in an article in the *Listener* (February 1948) maintains that Bruegel did not like the peasants whom he was constantly painting. That may be so, if to like means to approve of and to respect. But, paradoxical though it may sound, I feel convinced that Bruegel *loved* the peasants of his country even when he mocked at them. At

least he could not keep his eyes off them for all their stupidity, cowardice and grossness. He must have been indignant at beholding their sufferings and he must have known that suffering by no means always ennobles.

What, then, besides satire does Bruegel's 'Adoration of the Kings' express? The answer, so far as the visual can be translated into the verbal, seems to me to be something like this: 'If you are to take the narrative of the Gospel seriously at all, there is no value in treating the stable at Bethelehem as a pretty fairy story. Joseph and Mary were poor; they belonged to the artisan class; there was no refuge for them in the inn; the child Jesus, when he grew older, learned the trade of a carpenter. He was despised and ultimately executed by the great ones of the earth.'

To this it may be objected: 'That is all very well; but why did Bruegel make the wise men into artisans and foolish artisans at that, and why, worse still, did he treat the Mother of Jesus, the Child Himself, and Joseph, the spouse of Mary, as ignoble and unworthy of respect?' To this criticism I put forward an answer, admittedly tentative and at present unsupported by documentary evidence, which in view of the spirit of Bruegel's other illustrations of religious subjects, nevertheless seems to me to supply a reasonably tenable explanation. My answer is this: 'Is it not possible that the characters in this drama are not really meant to be the actual men and women of the gospel narrative? May they not be intended instead to be Flemish peasants acting the parts of the Holy Family, of the Magi who were Kings and of their retinue of soldiers in a Miracle Play?'

What first suggested this idea to me was the fact that the first and oldest king is wearing a cumbrous green garment with long sleeves, over which he has fastened another garment (pinkish crimson in colour) very much in the spirit in which a robe is hastily assumed in amateur theatricals; and the pink garment has sleeves which dangle and could by no ingenuity be made to cover the ample sleeves of the green garment.

I do not suggest that a Miracle Play was in Bruegel's mind when painting the other religious pictures mentioned in this article; for in them the principal characters, though little idealised, are not unworthy of their rôles; but it may be relevant that in the 'Numbering at Bethlehem', the 'Journey to Calvary' and the 'Crucifixion' the scene is set on Nature's own spacious stage, whereas in the 'Adoration', the crowd is confined to the most restricted of areas, producing an effect (eloquently described by Dr. Pevsner) almost of suffocation. May not this discomfort also be put down to the poor accommodation of the village theatre?

Such suggestions do not make Bruegel any the less enigmatic; and enigmas occur in nearly all his pictures. Some critics find him genially amusing; he was nicknamed 'the Droll'; others regard him as satirical to the point of grimness and bitterness; some think him a detached observer;

others believe him to have been a propagandist partisan, pleading for the fate of his fellow peasants. Roger Fry regarded him as too much of an illustrator; but Fry, in re-acting from the sentimental narrative art and upholding abstract coherence, balance and rhythm, often failed to note that the very qualities he extolled were often displayed best by painters whose conscious bent was for illustration. Curiosity about mankind can at its best nourish the formal and technical discoveries of an artist; and Bruegel's art, quite apart from his subject-matter, is always fascinating to painters because of the brush-work, the quality of paint, the colour, the pattern and the composition. In the 'Adoration' he has retained the technique of his predecessors in having primed the wood with white gesso, over which he has drawn with the brush, probably using egg-tempera as his medium, as a preparation for the final stage executed with transparent oil. This white gesso foundation is one reason for the excellent preservation of the picture.

In other technical matters Bruegel, though scorning Italian elegance, has been affected by his visit to Italy. The comparatively free brush-work, for instance in the hair, suggests that he has studied the work of Titian, and the subtle range of colour (particularly the cooler pinks, the mauves and slate greys used in opposition to the warm greens, yellows, orange reds and browns) are reminiscent of Italian mannerists. The light and the shade, inspired by observation, are broadly and effectively balanced. The linear pattern is full of subtle continuities and echoes. The composition, too, has analogies with that of Italian painters of the mid-sixteenth century. For instance, the Madonna faces the spectator obliquely (as often in Correggio and Titian) and the eye is led (as in many of their pictures) inwards obliquely from both sides of the stage. Limbs are directed and actions take place at an angle with the picture-plane, not parallel to it. Foreshortening, projection and recession play their parts in interconnecting the foreground with the background. Everything is correlated and given unity by means of what has been called 'plastic rhythm'. All these qualities contribute to, and derive from, the force of Bruegel's vision, which is as much alive today as when he painted his masterpiece.

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THE CASTLE IN THE CORNFIELD

The Novels of James Fenimore Cooper

P. H. NEWBY

THERE were times when Cooper demonstrated that he did not know the difference between a novel and a tract; yet this was a lack of artistic integrity that allowed him to carry out some of his best writing, a disappointing fact which is rather hard to account for. It is true that it turned most of his heroines into very stuffy creatures indeed (they were pert young women who reproved young men for enjoying themselves) but the non-existence of this ethical attitude towards literature would have robbed him of strange over-tones of character in his Indians, a richness of character in his squatters, a wonderful eye for a hypocrite and that most memorable of all his personalities, Nathaniel Bumppo. Cooper wrote in a world of faith and optimism: the savages had been defeated and the American continent was, in the idiom of the times, being 'improved'. But sometimes the optimism and Cooper's ethical drive take him one way, and his characters take him the other. Bumppo is a Moravian Christian but he is a ruthless killer; he is a model of chivalry and yet lives with savages and condones scalping. This twofold stress in Cooper's creative work gives it a vitality for which the writer himself does not entirely deserve the credit.

But there is a spot of decay. Fenimore Cooper was a writer of Lore. He was one of the very first of those literary salesmen of the inaccessible and the unverifiable. Unlike the pre-Romantic novelists, he was a pretender to secret knowledge. Because of his ethical urge, however, he went to work so nicely that one hardly notices his salesmanship. The eighteenth century had its Lore literature, its rogue literature, but the tone of these writings was not in any way patronising. They *informed* the gentle reader of the terrible things that went on in the world. The tone of *Manon Lescaut*, to take another example, is confessional; suitable deference is paid to the education and experience of the reader. *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and the novels of Richardson are revelatory, certainly, but the revelations are not of a different order of experience from those enjoyed by the reader. Richardson and Laclos wrote for their equals. Fenimore Cooper was one of the first novelists who, by the very nature of his material, the sea and the forest, was forced into a position of superiority.

The amusing thing is that Cooper knew comparatively little about Red Indians. 'You have the advantage of me,' he wrote to a certain C. A. Murray, 'for I was never among the Indians. All that I know of them is from reading or from hearing my father speak of them.'

But, after all, what does it matter? Conrad's good-humoured equanimity when charged with knowing nothing about Malayans will be remembered. He knew that his work had been with the imagination, and all other considerations were secondary. Cooper was not the first to use Red Indians as characters in his novels, but he was the first to possess them imaginatively and give them to the imagination of Europe. By reading *The Last of the Mohicans* one can dig under the roots of *Les Chouans*; the effect on Balzac of reading Cooper was to prevent his seeing peasants for Red Indians. Eugène Sue could no longer see Paris as a city so much as a mysterious forest in which he was the pathfinder and from whom you, poor reader, would do well to learn. Cooper pretended to strange knowledge, the message of a bent twig, the language of the forest, the meaning of the imprint of a mocassin, and his European readers accepted him with enthusiasm. Later on, after Thackeray, Dickens, Flaubert and Balzac had done their best work, Victor Hugo declared that Fenimore Cooper was the greatest novelist of the century. Like so many of Victor Hugo's statements, this may appear strange to us now but the absurdity of the claim was by no means clear at the time it was made.

In spite of all this, Cooper thought that America was no place for a writer. It was a raw, sterile country, full of the most wonderful possibilities but singularly lacking in Gothic Abbeys, ruins and haunted castles. 'In the dark ages of our history, it is true that we hung a few unfortunate women for witches and suffered a few inroads from the Indians; but the active curiosity of the people has transmitted these events with so much accuracy that there is no opportunity for digression. Then, again, notwithstanding that a murder is a serious business at all times, it is much more interesting in a castle than in a cornfield. In short, all that glow which can be given to a tale through the aid of obscure legends, artificial distinctions and images connected with the association of ideas, is not attainable in this land of facts. Man is not the same creature here as he is in other countries.'

This is from the preface to *The Spy* (1821), a book which has been called the first living American novel, but it is a note that recurs repeatedly throughout his writing career.

There is more here than the modesty of the provincial writer. The idea against which the American writer had to fight was not only that the European scribbler was his superior, but that the European subject was, by its very nature, superior too. After all, says Fenimore Cooper looking round him at the colonial wars of the eighteenth century, the War of

Independence itself, the pioneers working into the heart of America—what is there to write about? The Indian, the trapper and the sailor were not available to the creative mind as easily as were the lords and ladies of a feudal Europe. No one did more than Cooper to make them so; he built his castle in the cornfield, but one part of him still seems to have remained unconvinced.

This should have led to more queernesses than in fact it did. There is nothing like the consciousness of some inadequacy for arousing a demonstration of imaginative oddness, but Cooper was much too mature for any nonsense like that. One of the endearing things about the man is that, like Conrad, he did not write novels until he was past thirty. In both of them (as, above all, in Henry James) one feels a healthy lack of adventitious energy as compared with so many Romantic writers. They had achieved things in their own lives, were free from the secret inertia, compelling them to strangeness and to folly, that lies at the heart of so many frenetic artists. Yet there is a narrative strangeness in Cooper, an otherness that arises out of some undisciplined part of his mind, showing itself more often in small detail than in the general conception of any complete novel. His treatment of water, the sea, and ships, is a little odd, for example.

Cooper had been a sailor (like his friend Dana he sailed before the mast) as genuinely learned in the Lore of the sea as he was deficient in true knowledge of the forest. Ships were women and (this was a convention of the times which is still going strong) they were capricious, could draw on secret sources of energy, sometimes sailed in the eye of the wind, were creations for our wonder and our love. Fiercely inhibited in his straightforward accounts of feminine nature, Cooper was capable of attributing romantic mysteries to such craft as *The Water Witch*, a very fast smugglers' brigantine that could elude H.M. Customs with the tantalising grace of the flesh-and-blood heroine that Cooper was itching to put into a novel and which he dared not do for fear of what his wife would say. In real life his wife had snatched him from the sea (he gave up his career in the Navy to marry her); she stood between him and any chance of putting real women into his books, but she could not prevent him from projecting his fantasy of feminine nature on to the ships of his sea stories. Love Lore was not for Cooper (for whom was it but the French?) but he wrote the first true novels of the sea.

Water did have a curious attraction for him, both salt and fresh, but there is something about the very intimacy of the little fresh-water lakes of the State of New York that Cooper appears to have found almost disconcerting. There were no great ships to act as lightning conductors for him here, no spirit exorcising yard-arms, no consoling feminine presence. Cooper was alone with the limpid element itself and he looked at it crookedly. The most ordinary of circumstances (such as a man falling out of the boat and being rescued with a boat-hook) became new and exciting.

'The form of Benjamin was lying, about half way to the bottom, grasping with both hands some broken rushes. The blood of Elizabeth curdled to her heart as she saw the form of a fellow creature thus extended under an immense sheet of water, apparently in motion by the undulations of the dying waves, with its face and hands, viewed by that light, and through the medium of the fluid, already coloured with hues like death.

At the same instant, she saw the shining tines of Natty's spear approaching the head of the sufferer, and entwining themselves, rapidly and dextrously in the hairs of his queue and the cape of his coat. The body was now raised slowly . . . For a moment Natty held the steward suspended, with his head just above the water, while his eyes slowly opened and he stared about him, as if he thought that he had reached a new and unexplored country'. —*The Pioneers* Ch. XXIV.

Water was a medium in which ordinary experience was transmuted. Seen from the bottom of the lake, the world lay in recession from reality. The striking phrase in the excerpt from *The Pioneers* is 'an immense sheet of water'. It would be immense, not to the watching girl but to Benjamin or, rather, to Cooper himself who seems to have been drawn to this underwater vision of the world. 'Read them as myths,' said Lawrence of these Cooper novels. They are myths not because the events and characters have a significance higher than mere story telling, not because they are allegories (it is childish and absurd to look for symbolism and allegory in Fenimore Cooper) but because of the lift given to the narrative, at times, by some obscure striving, on the part of Cooper, to depersonalisation.

The Deerslayer has a crystal heart. Thomas Hutter, a one-time buccaneer, is living with his two daughters in a kind of fortified house that he has built on a reef in the Glimmerglass lake. All around are the forests, and in the forests the Indians watch and wait. Hutter's wife is dead. He has buried her on the floor of the lake.

'It was a low straggling mound of earth, fashioned by no spade, out of a corner of which gleamed a bit of white cloth that formed the shroud of the dead.'

In the course of time, Hutter, scalper of women and children and a savage among savages, is himself killed and his body lowered through the crystal water to lie beside that of his wife. Cooper dwells on the scene and causes two of his leading characters to have a most important conversation in a canoe while it floats immediately over the site of the underwater cemetery. The dark and passionate Judith offers herself in marriage to the innocent young Bumppo, Deerslayer as he is then called. The nominal

reason for his rejecting her is her flirtatious disposition. Nothing was to breathe on the chill crystal of Moravian morals through which Deerslayer viewed the world, a kind of Glimmerglass in the soul, shielding him from human temptation.

In his Red Indians, Cooper created a valid emotional attitude to the fearful and the unknown, to (in Conrad's phrase) 'the heart of darkness'. Uncas, the great warrior, is not a character in the ordinary sense of the term. His reality consists in our conviction of his otherness, his monstrous self control, his code of honour, his rapacity for scalps. These qualities suffice for the myth through which he moves. In these Leather Stocking tales there are really two enemies, the nominal enemy and the real enemy. It was against the French or the Iroquois that Uncas and Bumppo went out to war, but the real enemy is the wilderness, the unknown of which the skulking and merciless Indians are the mere agents. This marked Cooper out from any other novelist who had written before; his heroes contended with unhuman enemies (they were not gods for they were not rational) who, for this is the story of America, were eventually overcome and destroyed. The other world of mystery went down; the trees were blazed, and Nathaniel Bumppo went west, out of harmony with the white invaders and loving only his impersonal enemy and the Indian for whose dispossession he grieved.

It is too lightly assumed that the characters of a Cooper novel are mere puppets. This is not true. He was not, like Smollett or Fielding, one of the great originals, one of the fount-heads of character. Indeed, it was from Smollett that he appears to have taken the pattern for most of his comic creations. (The naturalist in *The Prairie*, the surgeon in *The Spy*, Captain Manual and Major Borroughcliffe in *The Pilot*, are all Smollett characters —and very good and convincing they are, too.) But there is enough native sense of character in Cooper to set up any two second-rate novelists in business. Guert Ten Eyck of *Satanstoe* is a fine rendering of an Albany Dutchman of the middle of the eighteenth century; there is Thomas Hutter of *The Deerslayer*, a man of blood who dies memorably; Hurry Harry in the same novel is a beautifully realised creation; of all Cooper's women, Anneke of *Satanstoe* is the most delightful, while Judith, of *The Deerslayer*, seems to be the one about whom Cooper felt most intensely.

One's mind always goes back to the squatters. They are a dark strength in many of the novels and, in *The Chainbearer* especially, provide a series of brilliantly-written chapters in which quick-moving action, natural description and discussion about the rights and wrongs of squatting (all good stuff this, straight from the heart, strongly felt—and they were the sort of people whom Cooper must, in real life, have hated!) are all fused into the narrative. Perhaps Ishmael, the squatter of *The Prairie*, and his family, moving out with their wagons and cattle into the heart of the American continent,

were the finest things that Cooper did. The family is held together by a sullen intensity of feeling, the kind of nervous cohesion that Lawrence was so good at capturing. The little community is islanded by the immensities of America (how one feels this yawning away of territory); their cattle and horses are captured by hostile Indians and they have to defend themselves in a natural fortress which is discovered for them by the ancient Bumppo. Then one of Ishmael's sons is murdered by his brother-in-law; the squatter carries out the execution himself by hanging.

> 'Ishmael turned and pursued his way across the plain at his ordinary sluggish and ponderous gait. Though his head was bent a little towards the earth, his inactive mind did not prompt him to cast one look behind. Once, indeed, he thought he heard his name called, in tones that were a little smothered, but they failed to make him pause. At the spot where he and Esther had conferred, he reached the boundary of the visible horizon from the rock. Here he stopped and ventured a glance in the direction of the place he had just quitted. The sun was dipping into the plains beyond and its last rays lighted the naked branches of the willow. He saw the ragged outline of the whole drawn against the glowing heavens, and he even traced the still upright form of the being he had left to his misery. Turning the roll of the swell, he proceeded with the feelings of one who had been violently and suddenly separated from a recent confederate for ever.'

The following night he goes back to the scene of the execution, and his wife Esther, sister of the dead man, follows him. She says that her brother should be buried, so they walk to the rocky ledge where Abiram is hanging from a tree.

> 'The grim and convulsed countenance of the victim was at times brought full into the light of the moon, and again as the wind lulled, the fatal rope drew a dark line across its bright disk. The squatter raised his rifle with extreme care and fired. The cord was cut and the body came lumbering to the earth, a heavy and insensible mass.
>
> For the first time in a life of so much wild adventure Ishmael felt a keen sense of solitude. The naked prairies began to assume the forms of illimitable and dreary wastes and the rushing of the wind sounded like the whisperings of the dead.'

Nathaniel Bumppo comes to terms with savagery, is the intimate of scalpers, by virtue of his belief in 'gifts'.

> Gifts come from sarcumstances. Thus, if you put a man in a town he gets town gifts; in a settlement, settlement gifts; in a forest, gifts of the

> woods. A soldier has soldierly gifts and a missionary preaching gifts. All these increase and strengthen until they get to fortify natur' as it might be, an' excuse a thousand acts and ideas.—*The Deerslayer*. Ch. 25.

It is the 'gift' of his enemy to be treacherous; it is the 'gift' of Uncas to suffer torture without flinching and to take the scalp of his persecutor when he is freed. The vagaries of human nature are, according to Bumppo, to be accepted with the same lack of feeling as one accepts vagaries in the weather. Such a man kills without anger and preserves his own inner calm. He is not cynical. On the contrary, he is innocent and humble. His language is rich with terms of the chase and tribal warfare; he makes long speeches when one feels long speeches are not called for, when he should, surely, be looking round for the inevitable Indian concealed in the foliage. But it is his 'gift' to be talkative, to be a moraliser in the good eighteenth-century way; and somehow there is enough grandeur in his personality to enable him to carry off this talking and home-spun philosophising. To some degree this memorable tolerance of Bumppo's was forced upon Cooper by the necessity of making his hero, though part of the savage scene, the kind of God-fearing Christian who would be accepted by his readers as a suitable subject for admiration. It came off.

Who reads Fenimore Cooper today? The public libraries have put his books in the juvenile department and there the dust is bound to gather. They are much too difficult for children. Much of what he wrote suffers from the very lack of seriousness with which he took the art of novel-writing, resulting in a poor organisation of his material, wasteful description, adventitious incident. One can see what qualities Cooper relied on to make his novels popular; they were roughly the same as those of Scott—and Scott said that a plot was only an excuse for bringing in fine things. This is all very well for writers in a vigorous age, for the Fieldings, the Smolletts and the Sternes, men of an emotional calibre which allowed them to write, not with the weight of their fists, but with the whole weight of their bodies. This manner was not possible for a provincial writer like Cooper—nor, for that matter, for Scott himself.

Yet what a sweep there was to his imagination! Certain South American tribes have the art of shrinking a man's head to the size of a clenched fist. Some literary critics work in the same tradition; they shrink a novel to manageable proportions, pluck out the revealing paragraph and damn the work as lightly as they would an anecdote. We all know the gentleman who says, 'You know, I can tell whether a novel is going to be any good or not as soon as I have read the first sentence.'

James Fenimore Cooper is not for the head-hunters.

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THE HOUSE OF BREAD

ARLAND USSHER

'HÄNSEL UND GRETEL' is perhaps the most popular of the stories with children—young and old; the house of bread (the meaning, one remembers, of Bethlehem), roofed with cake and with windows of sugar, is remembered by many, possibly, who have forgotten almost everything else in the fairy-tales. It appeals to that primaeval Hunger, which is at the back of so many religious mysteries, the sense that Matter—in a deeper sense than H. G. Wells knew of—is itself 'the Food of the Gods'. The mystical hunger of the lost children betrays them to the cannibal hunger of the witch—which, however, consumes itself, in the end, by its own blind and barren ego-hood. The story begins, significantly, with a famine—that dearth which in so many tales suggests to us the withering of the ancient wisdom. The conserving principle, represented by the mother, has lost vital warmth and become destructive—a jealous Herod, she demands that the children be thrust out; and the creative force of the father is too weakened to make effective protest. When it is winter in the world, and all the ways are barren, we are driven to cast away our mind-children: and yet they subsist out of an independent life, and, often enough, they return to us enriched. But this is to anticipate. The children overhear the Lady Macbeth tauntings of the mother, and the father's weak compliance; and the son—representing the true initiative in action, as the rapacious mother was the false one—calms his sister with an instantly-conceived plan. He slips from the house and fills his pockets with pebbles, which gleam in the moonlight like the very phases of the moon, or the cold steps of a process of logic. In the morning the parents take the two children to the forest, where they go to fetch wood, giving them enough bread for one meal only. Hänsel keeps looking back at the house, each time dropping a pebble from his pocket; being asked by his mother why he turns back, he replies that his little cat on the roof is saying good-bye to him, but she scolds him, telling him it is only the shimmer of the sun. The world mocks our illusions? Yes, truly, but the point is that those illusions are never *quite* illusions—they are also signs and parables by which we plot our life's course and mystify that prying world; the fables of children and primitives are not only beautiful dreams but extremely practical private languages. The parents presently make a fire, and leave the children to eat and sleep; it reminds us of the sudden warmth with which we take leave of a person of whom we are glad to be rid—the rather cruel truth (known to actors and other artists) that we only express our emotions perfectly after we have ceased to feel them. The children think

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they hear the father's axe, and are slowly lulled to sleep; but it is a branch which the parents have tied to a withered tree, and which sways in the wind. The desolate sense is conveyed of the air beating, in mechanical repetition, around hollow things. At midnight Hänsel and Gretel awake, as the tangles of the day-time untie themselves in the night; and the pebbles, gleaming in the moon, guide the children homeward, infinitely to the father's relief and the mother's exasperation. It is the end of the prologue—so far the bridges of thought and practical intelligence are not down; all has been simple as a problem in Euclid, and the irrationality of the forest's Heart has not been encountered. The real story now begins; famine returns, and the mother again insists—with Malthusian logic—that the children be sacrificed. He who says 'A' must say 'B'; the conservative premise of the Past, when not opposed with the creative premise of the Future, bruises all life in its iron circle—the Eternal Feminine becomes the Infernal Female when not irradiated by the Temporal Masculine; the 'Abyss' of mystics becomes the real Abyss. Again the children 'overhear' the pillow-conference, by the unsleeping intuition of the Spirit; but this time the mother—like an ever more inexorable Fate—has bolted the door, so that Hänsel cannot gather pebbles: all logical evasions are cut off. At morning the departure to the woods is repeated, with Hänsel looking backward at intervals to the shimmer on the roof (his little pigeon saying goodbye to him, he asserts), dropping as he does so his bread-portion, crumb by crumb. But this time the parents lead them far into the forest, 'where they had never been in their lives before': they are fairly out of their rational depth. Again the fire is lit, and they are left to eat and sleep; but when they waken at midnight, the dropped bread-crumbs have been eaten by birds, and they cannot thread the maze. We cannot use those crumbs of life-experience—our traditional concepts and nursery-mottoes—as logical counters; in the chaos of living they lose their shapes, become merged and scattered among life's flocking demands. And so the children wander hopelessly, till *on the third day* they encounter a beautiful snow-white bird, which draws them after it by its singing; it is the allurement and glamour of the natural world, which we follow when tradition's strings are cut. The bird comes to rest upon that famous cottage all of bread, covered with cake and with window-panes of transparent sugar. Hänsel and Gretel start eating the roof and windows with a will, and a voice from within cries 'Who is nibbling my house?' 'The wandering wind,' reply the children with promptitude. It would be heavy-handed (and too obvious) to seek for allegories in so cheerful a moment; for all our thought-constructions, it should be remembered, are primarily things to be *tasted*: we live *on* them as well as *in* them—their truth is more transient than vagabond fancy. An old crone comes out of the house, bids them welcome, and—taking them indoors—treats them to everything of the best. But their joy is short-lived:

she is a witch who has designed the edible house as a trap for children. The next morning Hänsel is taken and imprisoned in a stall, where the helpless Gretel must bring him food. The Will, in order to develop, must assimilate material out of the Subconscious; but unless its sister—the drudging Mind—stays on the alert, it will itself be devoured in that witch-kitchen. Hänsel is nourished by the witch a month long—that waxing moon of the blood—while the despised Gretel must live, like a waning moon, on the crabshells of bare mental concepts. The witch comes daily to Hänsel's stall to satisfy herself that he is putting on flesh; but her sight is weaker than her baser senses, and, instead of his finger, Hänsel stretches a piece of bone to her through the bars—like those 'rationalisations' with which the Will satisfies the short-sighted. After a month, the witch's patience is exhausted —she heats the oven and bids Gretel get inside it to see, as she says, if it is hot enough for bread-baking; Gretel, with feigned simplicity, asks how she should proceed, and the witch—by a reversal familiar in fairy-tales—commits the rather unlikely stupidity of giving a demonstration. She has fallen into her own trap, and is burnt to death; Gretel runs to release Hänsel—Wit through its detachment has saved Will, like Æsop's mouse which set free the enmeshed lion. They fill their pockets out of the witch's jewel-hoard—the frozen instinctual fires from the buried and misappropriated past—and start joyfully homewards; with the witch out of the way, it is suggested, the spell of error is lifted from the heart's Dark Wood, and all paths have become plain. But first a river, a Red Sea, has to be crossed: that watery reflective element which foreshadows the Future while it halts the Past, and which only intuition of the Present's time-beat can traverse. That intuition is represented by the duck—opposite to the sensuously luring singing bird—which transports the children to safety: the symbolical aquatic fowl honoured in Egyptian eschatology, which broods over the World's Egg. The children regain their home, and their father—like the sorrowing patriarch Jacob—is filled with happiness: the Spirit has endured in hope's eternity, but Matter's law is overcome—the selfish mother lives no longer.

The story ends with a scrap of nonsense-verse, which is not perhaps without meaning for the imagination, and might form a fitting farewell to all and each one of the Tales: 'My tale is done, there runs a mouse, whosoever catches it may make himself a big furcap out of it.' If you are not afraid of the warm teeming earthy life, you may weave from it a comfortable and gallant wisdom, in which your poor human thinking can repose.

THE TWO VAYNES

L. P. HARTLEY

THOSE garden-statues! My host was pardonably proud of them. They crowned the balustrade of the terrace; they flanked its steps; they dominated the squares and oblongs—high, roofless chambers of clipped yew—which, seen from above, had somewhat the appearance of a chessboard. In fact, they peopled the whole vast garden; and as we went from one to another in the twilight of a late September evening, I gave up counting them. Some stood on low plinths on the closely-shaven grass; others, water-deities, rose out of goldfish-haunted pools. Each was supreme in its own domain, and enveloped in mystery, secrecy and silence.

'What do you call these?' I asked my host, indicating the enclosures. 'They have such an extraordinary shut-in feeling.'

'Temene,' he said, carefully stressing the three syllables. 'Temenos is Greek for the precincts of a god.'

'The Greeks had a word for it,' I said, but he was not amused.

Some of the statues were of grey stone, on which lichen grew in golden patches; others were of lead, the sooty hue of which seemed sun-proof. These were already gathering to themselves the coming darkness: perhaps they had never really let it go.

It was the leaden figures that my host most resembled; in his sober country clothes of almost clerical cut—breeches, tight at the knee, surmounting thin legs cased in black stockings, with something recalling a Norfolk jacket on top—he looked so like one of his own duskier exhibits that, as the sinking sun plunged the temene in shadow, and he stood with outstretched arm pointing at a statue that was also pointing, he might have been mistaken for one.

'I have another to show you,' he said, 'and then I'll let you go and dress.'

Rather to my surprise, he took my arm and steered me to the opening which, I now saw, was in the further corner. (Each temenos had an inlet and an outlet, to connect it with its neighbours.) As we passed through, he slipped his arm out of mine and bent down as though to tie up his shoe-lace. I walked slowly on towards a figure which, even at this distance, seemed to differ in some way from the others.

They were all gods and goddesses, nymphs and satyrs, dryads and oreads, divinities of the ancient world: but this was not. I quickened my steps. It was the figure of a man in modern dress, and something about it was familiar. But was it a statue? Involuntarily I stood still and looked back. My host was not following me; he had disappeared. Yet here he was, facing me, with his arm stretched out, almost as if he were going to shake hands with me. But no; the bent forefinger showed that he was beckoning.

Again I looked behind me to the opening now shrouded in shadow, but there was no one. Stifling my repugnance, and to be frank my fear, and putting into my step all the defiance I could muster, I approached the figure. It was smiling with the faint sweet smile of invitation that one sees in some of Leonardo's pictures. So life-like was the smile, such a close copy of the one I had seen on my host's face, that I stopped again, wondering which to believe: my common sense or my senses. While I was debating, a laugh rang out. I jumped—the figure might have uttered it; it sounded so near. But the smiling features never changed, and a second later I saw my host coming to me across the grass.

He laughed again, less histrionically, and rather uncertainly I joined in.

'Well,' he said, 'you must forgive my practical joke. But you'll understand how it amuses me to see what my guests will *do* when they see that figure. I've had a hole made through the hedge to watch. Some of them have been quite frightened. Some see through the trick at once and laugh before I get the chance to—the joke is then on me. But most of them do what you did—start and stop, and start and stop,

wondering if they can trust their eyes. It's fun watching people when they don't know they are being watched. I can always tell which are the . . . the imaginative ones.'

I laughed a little wryly.

'Cheer up,' he said, though I would have rather he had not noticed my loss of poise. 'You came through the ordeal very well. Not an absolute materialist like the brazen ones, who know no difference between seeing and believing. And not—certainly not—well, a funk, like some of them. Mind you, I don't despise them for it. You stood your ground. A well-balanced man, I should say, hard-headed but open-minded, cautious but resolute. You said you were a writer?'

'In my spare time,' I mumbled.

'Then you are used to looking behind appearances.'

While he was speaking, I compared him to the figure, and though the general resemblance was striking—the same bold nose, the same retreating forehead—I wondered how I could have been taken in by it. The statue's texture was so different! Lead, I supposed. Having lost my superstitious horror, I came nearer. I detected a thin crack in the black stocking, and thoughtlessly put my finger-nail into it.

'Don't do that,' he warned me. 'The plaster flakes off so easily.'

I apologised. 'I didn't mean to pull your leg. But is it plaster? It's so dark, as dark as, well—your suit.'

'It was painted that colour,' my host said, 'to make the likeness closer.'

I looked again. The statue's face and hands were paler than its clothes, but only a pale shade of the same tone. And this, I saw, was true to life. A leaden tint underlay my host's natural swarthiness.

'But the other statues are of stone, aren't they?' I asked.

'Yes,' he said, 'they are. This one was an experiment.'

'An experiment?'

'My experiment,' he said. 'I made it.' He did not try to conceal his satisfaction.

'How clever of you!' I exclaimed, stepping back to examine the cast more critically. 'It's you to the life. It almost seems to move.'

'Move?' he repeated, his voice distant and discouraging.

'Yes, move,' I said, excited by my fantasy. 'Don't you see how flat the grass is round it? Wouldn't a statue let the grass grow under its feet?'

He answered still more coldly: 'My gardeners have orders to clip the grass with shears.'

Snubbed and anxious to retrieve myself, I said: 'Oh, but it is the living image!' I remembered the motto on his crested writing-paper. '*Vayne sed non vanus*. I adore puns. "Vayne but not vain." You but not you. How do you translate it?'

'We usually say, "Vayne but not empty".' My host's voice sounded mollified.

'How apt!' I prattled on. 'Its Vayne all right, but is it empty? Is it just a suit of clothes?'

He looked hard at me and said:

'Doesn't the apparel oft proclaim the man?'

'Of course,' I said, delighted by the quickness of his answer. 'But isn't this Vayne a bigger man than you are—in the physical sense, I mean?'

'I like things to be over-life size,' he replied. 'I have a passion for the grand scale.'

'And here you are able to indulge it,' I said, glancing towards the great house which made a rectangle of intense dark in the night sky.

'But service isn't what it was before the war,' he rather platitudinously remarked. 'The trouble I've had, looking for a footman! Still, I think you'll find your bath has been turned on for you.'

I took the hint and was moving away when suddenly he called me back.

'Look!' he said, 'don't let's change for dinner. I've got an idea. Fairclough hasn't been before; it's his first visit, too. He hasn't seen the statues. After dinner we'll play a game of hide and seek. I'll hide, and you and he shall seek—here, among the statues. It may be a bit dull for you, because you'll be in the secret. But if you're bored, you can hunt for me, too—I don't think you'll find me. That's the advantage of knowing the terrain—perhaps rather an unfair one. We'll have a time-limit. If you haven't found me within twenty minutes, I'll make a bolt for home, whatever the circumstances.'

'Where will "home" be?'

'I'll tell you later. But don't say anything to Fairclough.'

I promised not to. 'But, forgive me,' I said, 'I don't quite see the point—'

'Don't you? What I want to happen is for Fairclough to mistake the statue for me. I want to see him . . . well . . . startled by it.'

'He might tackle it low and bring it crashing down.'

My host looked at me with narrowed eyes.

'If you think that, you don't know him. He's much too timid. He won't touch it—they never do until they know what it is.'

By 'they' I supposed him to mean his dupes, past, present and to come.

We talked a little more, and parted.

I found the footman laying out my dress-suit on the bed. I told him about not changing and asked if Mr. Fairclough had arrived yet.

'Yes, sir, he's in his room.'

'Could you take me to it?'

I followed him along a passage inadequately lit by antique lanterns, most of which were solid at the bottom.

Fairclough was undressing. I told him we were to wear our ordinary clothes.

'What!' he exclaimed. 'But he always dresses for dinner.'

'Not this evening.' I didn't altogether like my rôle of accomplice, but Fairclough had the weakness of being a know-all. Perhaps it would do him no harm to be surprised for once.

'I wonder if Postgate dressed,' I said, broaching the topic which had been exercising my mind ever since I set foot in the house.

'He must have done,' said Fairclough. 'Didn't you know? His dress-clothes were never found.'

'I don't remember the story at all well,' I prompted him.

'There's very little to remember,' Fairclough said. 'He arrived, as we have; they separated to dress for dinner, as we have; and he was never seen or heard of again.'

'There were other guests, weren't there?'

'Yes, the house was full of people.'

'When exactly did it happen?'

'Three years ago, two years after Vayne resigned the chairmanship.'

'Postgate had a hand in that, hadn't he?'

'Yes, don't you know?' said Fairclough. 'It was rather generous of Vayne to forgive him in the circumstances. It didn't make much difference to Vayne; he'd probably have resigned in any case, when he inherited this place from his uncle. It was meant to be a sort of reconciliation party, burying the hatchet, and all that.'

I agreed that it was magnanimous of Vayne to make it up with someone who had got him sacked. 'And he's still loyal to the old firm,' I added, 'or we shouldn't be here.'

'Yes, and we're such small fry,' Fairclough said. 'It's the company, not us, he's being kind to.'

I thought of the small ordeal ahead of Fairclough, but it hardly amounted to a breach of kindness.

'I suppose we mustn't mention Postgate to him?' I said.

'Why not? I believe he likes to talk about him. Much better for him than bottling it up.'

'Would you call him a vain man?' I asked.

'Certainly, Vayne by name and vain by nature.'

'He seemed rather pleased with himself as a sculptor,' I remarked.

'A sculptor?' echoed Fairclough.

I realised my indiscretion, but had gone too far to draw back. 'Yes, didn't you know?' I asked maliciously. 'He's done a statue. A sort of portrait. And he talks of doing some more. Portraits of his friends in plaster. He asked me if I'd be his model.'

'I wonder if he'd do one of me?' asked Fairclough, with instinctive egotism. 'I should make rather a good statue, I think.' Half-undressed, he surveyed himself in the mirror. Long and willowy, fair complexioned as his name, he had a bulging knobby forehead under a thin thatch of hair. 'Did you say yes?' he asked.

'I said I couldn't stand, but if he would make it a recumbent effigy, I would lie to him.'

We both laughed.

'Where's his studio?' asked Fairclough, almost humbly. 'Underground. He says he prefers to work by artificial light.'

We both thought about this, and some association of ideas made me ask:

'Is the house haunted?'

'Not that I ever heard of,' Fairclough said. 'But there's a legend about a bath.'

'A bath?'

'Yes, it's said to be on the site of an old lift-shaft, and to go up and down. Funny how such stories get about. And talking of baths,' Fairclough went on, 'I must be getting into mine. You may not know it, but he doesn't like one to be a minute late.'

'Just let me look at it,' I said. 'Mine's down a passage. You have one of your own, you lucky dog.'

We inspected the appointments, which were marble and luxurious, and very up to date, except for the bath itself, which was an immense, old-fashioned mahogany contraption with a lid.

'A lid!' I exclaimed. 'Don't you know the story of the Mistletoe Bough?' Fairclough clearly didn't, and with this parting shot I left him.

* * *

In spite of Fairclough's warning, I was a few minutes late for dinner. How that came about occupied my thoughts throughout the marvellous meal, though I could not bring myself to speak of it and would much rather not have thought about it. I'm afraid I was a dull guest, and Vayne himself was less animated than he had been before dinner. After dinner, however, he cheered up, and when he was giving us our orders for the evening, editing them somewhat for Fairclough's benefit, he had recovered all his old assurance. We were to divide, he said; I was to take the left-hand range of yew compartments, or temene, as he preferred to call them, and Fairclough the right. Standing on the terrace steps, a long steep flight, he indicated to us our spheres of action. 'And home will be here, between the statues,' he wound up. 'I'll call "coo-ee" when I'm ready.'

He strolled off in the direction of the house. Fairclough and I walked cautiously down the steps on to the great circle of grass from which the two blocks of temene diverged. Here we bowed ceremoniously and parted. Fairclough disappeared into the green wall.

At last I was alone with my thoughts. Of course it was only another of Vayne's practical jokes; I realised that now. But at the moment when it happened, I was scared stiff. And I still couldn't help wondering what would have become of me if—well, if I had got into the bath. I just put my foot in, as I often do, to test the water. I didn't pull it out at once, for the water was rather cool. In fact I put my whole weight on it.

'Coo-ee!'

Now the hunt was up. Fairclough would be peering in the shadows. But mine was merely a spectator's rôle; I was Vayne's stooge. His stooge . . .

Directly I felt something give, I pulled my foot out, and the lid came down and the bath sank through the floor like a coffin at a cremation service. Goodness, how frightened I was! I heard the click as the bath touched bottom; but I couldn't see it down the shaft. Then I heard rumbling again, and saw the bath-lid coming up. But I did not risk getting in, not I.

'Coo-ee!'

I jumped. It sounded close beside me. I moved into another temenos, trying to pretend that I was looking for Vayne. Really it would serve him right if I gave him away to Fairclough. He had no business to frighten people like that.

'Coo-ee'!

Right over on Fairclough's side, now. But it sounded somehow different; was it an owl? It might not be very easy to find Fairclough; there must be half a hundred of these blasted temene, and the moon was hidden by clouds. He might go out through one opening just as I was entering by another, and so we might go on all night. Thank goodness the night was warm. But what a silly farce it was.

I could just see to read my watch. Another quarter of an hour to go. Fairclough must be getting jumpy. I'll go and find him, I thought, and put him wise about the figure. Vayne would never know. Or would he? One couldn't tell where he was, he might be in the next temenos, watching me through a hole.

A light mist was descending, which obscured the heads of such statues as I could see projecting above the high walls of the temene. If it grew thicker, I might not see Fairclough even if he were close to me, and we might wander about till Doomsday—at least, for another ten

minutes, which seemed just as long to wait.

I looked down, and saw that my feet had left tracks, dark patches in the wet grass. They seemed to lead in all directions. But were they all mine? Had I really walked about as much as that? I tried to identify the footprints and see if they tallied.

'Coo-ee!'

That almost certainly was an owl; the sound seemed to come from above. But perhaps Vayne added ventriloquism to his other accomplishments. He was capable of anything. Not a man one could trust. Postgate hadn't trusted him—not, at least, as the chairman of a company.

It was my duty, I now felt, to warn Fairclough. And I should be quite glad to see him myself, quite glad. But where was he?

I found myself running from one temenos to another and getting back to the one I started from. I could tell by the figure: at least that didn't move. I started off again. Steady, steady. Here was a temenos with no footprints on it—a virgin temenos. I raced across it and found myself in the central circle.

Now I was in Fairclough's preserves. Poor Fairclough! To judge by the footprints, he had been running round even more than I had. But were they all his? Here was the figure of Pan—the god of panic. Very appropriate.

'Fairclough! Fairclough!' I began to call as loudly as I dared, having nearly but not quite lost my head.

'Fairclough! Fairclough!' I couldn't bring myself to hug the walls; the shadows were too thick; I stuck to the middle of each space.

I suppose I was expecting to find him, and yet when I heard him answer 'Here!' I nearly jumped out of my skin. He was crouching against a hedge. He evidently had the opposite idea from mine; he felt the hedge was a protection; and I had some difficulty in persuading him to come out into the open.

'Listen!' I whispered. 'What you've got to do is—'

'But I've seen him,' Fairclough said. 'There's his footmark.'

I looked: the footmark was long and slurred, quite unlike his or mine.

'If you're sure it was him,' I said, 'why didn't you speak to him?'

'I did,' said Fairclough, 'but he didn't answer. He didn't even turn round.'

'Someone may have got into the garden,' I said, 'some third person. But we'll find out. I'll take you to the statue.'

'The statue?'

'I'll explain afterwards'

I had regained some confidence, but could not remember in which direction Vayne's statue lay.

Suddenly I had an idea.

'We'll follow the footprints.'

'Which?' asked Fairclough.

'Well, the other person's.'

Easy to say; easy to distinguish them from ours; but which way were they pointing? That was the question.

'He walks on his heels,' I said. 'It's this way.'

We followed and reached the temenos where the statue had stood. No possibility of mistake. We saw the patches of dead grass where its feet had been; we saw the footprints leading away from them. But the statue was not there.

'Vayne!' I shouted. 'Vayne!'

'Coo-ee!' came a distant call.

'To the steps,' I cried. 'To the steps! Let's go together!'

Vayne was standing on the terrace steps: I saw him plainly; and I also saw the figure that was stalking him: the other Vayne. Two Vaynes. Vayne our host was standing between the statues, lordly, confident, triumphing over the night. 'Coo-ee!' he hooted to his moonlit acres. 'Coo-ee!' But the other Vayne had mounted the grass slope and was coming at him from behind.

For a moment the four figures stood in a row, each as motionless as the others. Then a scream rang out; there was a whirl of limbs, like the Manxman's wheel revolving; a savage snarl, a headlong fall, a crash. Both fell, both Vaynes. When the thuds of their descent were over, silence reigned.

They were lying in a heap together, a tangled heap of men and plaster. A ceiling might have fallen on them, yet it was not a ceiling; it was almost a third man, for the plaster fragments still bore a human shape. Both Vaynes were dead but one of them, we learned afterwards, had been dead for a long time. And this Vayne was not Vayne at all, but Postgate.

THE FACE

WALTER DE LA MARE

NORA sat on the edge of her iron bed, the fingers of one hand firmly grasping its rail, her two strong legs, set wide apart, half supporting her as she gazed out of the window. The eyes gazing out from under the dark brows in that square, strong-boned face were vague with reverie: aware —yet heedless—of all that was happening down below.

It was two o'clock in the afternoon, and a Sunday. The September sun was now slanting fiercely towards the west. Its beams shone through the yellow and red of the canary-creeper and the nasturtiums on the garden fence, as if their flowers were of frailest coloured glass. And the glass in the gay, green-and-white little greenhouse at the foot of George Trimmins's garden flashed so like a heliograph that the face up at the window shone in its reflected light —like the moon's.

His mother—voluminous body, large grey head—having now gone indoors, no doubt for her Sunday nap, George was sitting in his shirt-sleeves among his pigeons: snow-white creatures that toora-looed and paced and ducketed on the gravel about his feet, while two of their fellows cooed love secrets into his ear. Across a white wing, he would ever and again cast up furtive glances at the open window. But Nora just now wasn't thinking of him. She was trying to make up her mind whether to set off at once for 'the Ponds'—or just not to. She knew that everything would be bound to look different. She realised that, in spite of its vividness, the memory of the night before might seem little more than an illusion in the light of day, and that of a Sunday afternoon! But she must chance it. She had even now and then positively *hoped*, though her lips tightened a little at this, that it would.

Either way, it would be better to have it over and done with. In some respects the whole experience had been so absurd, so ridiculous, even silly, so unlike her usual, commonsensical self. What indeed can it have had to *do* with her? And how could it possibly have made such a difference? Still, even if it had—just for the time being —what did it matter? How would she ever be able to explain it even to herself?

That was the worst of it. There was no positive need, of course, to tell anyone else a word about it. But George; she would have to tell George. But exactly what? How much? He might understand the solitary walk—the wish, almost the craving to be alone. He might think her silly—daft, if you like: so far. But what about the face which she could still see, even with her eyes wide open as they were open now and fixed on his pacing pigeons—that was the absurdest thing of all? How could George possibly ever be made to understand *that*.

The decision would have to wait for a while, until they were alone again. But how was she to sit through the evening that was coming as if nothing had happened? Never before in all her born days had Nora's mind been so full of thoughts that wouldn't stay straight, that wouldn't match, wouldn't let her out. What could be wrong, what had come over her, and when was she going to become her usual, matter-of-fact self again? Hands, like her mother's, square and capable, but now idle in her lap; her bosom slowly heaving as she drew breath, her thoughts at length drooped back into day dreaming again, and as if into the company of another self. Then suddenly, with a sigh as deep as water from a well, she withdrew her gaze from the window, floated up out of her reverie, and here she was, back in her small, square bedroom again!

Illuminated texts hung from unnecessarily large nails against the faded, damp-stained, blue-patterned wall-paper: 'Thou Searchest Out All My Ways', above the

grained washing-stand, and, over the mantel-piece, 'The Price of Wisdom is Above Rubies'; its 'price' in pale green, its 'wisdom' in clear blue, and its 'rubies' a rich red. Nora, from the time when she was a little girl of five or six had explored every fraction of every inch of these texts again and again. She knew by heart every single one of the wooden-looking doves in the first; every sea-shell and fragment of sea-weed in the other.

On the mantel-piece itself were arranged her china animals; 'quaint' hideous treasured creatures, some with large bows of ribbon round their necks. They were one and all eyeing her with a vacuous grin combined with an incredibly void stare. And, in between them, stood photographs of bygone 'boys'. One of them in a hard straw hat, leaning nonchalantly against a property urn; another, with his brother, seated on the steps of a bathing machine in marine surroundings; and the same young man, topped with what appeared to be a rococo paper nightcap now, one of an animated and well-bottled group in an open char-à-banc.

On the chest-of-drawers Nora's father, Mr. Hopper, faced Nora's mother. He, as usual, was gazing blandly out of the cardboard at his daughter; and her mother sitting there, ample yet solid, was staring no less flatly across in his direction, as if at the moment she had far from approved either of him or the photographer. However, there she *was*, and who cared who saw her! Nora took after them both. She had her mother's compact square head, frank challenging eye, and full figure; and yet, even at this moment, a glimpse of her father's half-wistful reserve lurked somewhere in her young vigorous features.

Of George, there was no trace in the little room. Although Nora had been engaged to him for weeks now, his photograph was still shut up in a drawer. Why, she hardly knew. She didn't mind Alf and Sidney watching her dressing and undressing out of their skimpy little frames. They had nothing to do with it. Why not George, then? He was coming this evening to Sunday supper; to be introduced to Uncle Ben and Aunt Emma. Nora shifted uneasily. She recalled other family reunions. She hadn't forgotten the evening when her Uncle Joseph, who had finally emigrated to Australia, brought his wife and children to see them. Nor her confirmation, either! But Mrs. Hopper had known George and his family for years; from when he was a little boy, his hair smarmed down with hair oil, and his small square nose in the middle of his face. He and Nora were going to be married.

She looked up sharply, rose to her feet, her mind made up. She would set off to the Ponds at once. Her father was safe downstairs in his easy-chair, his handkerchief over his head. It was the one thing he couldn't abide—flies. And her mother in the next room for the time being at least, must be far beyond all interest in Nora's doings—her patchwork quilt half-drawn over her petticoats, the rest of her completely *négligée*.

Nora's sudden hasty activity, however, had not been entirely unheeded. Her *fiancé* had at last realised that the young lady up above wasn't concerned just now with him and his 'fancy'. He wasn't hurt; no fear: she had her moods and her silences. Pretending not to have been even hoping, he clapped his hands, and Nora watched from under the brim of the hat she was putting on before her looking-glass as—with a sudden wild flutter and scurry—away went the beautiful birds up into the vacant air, their wings, cold and white as foam or snow, clapping together under the blue of the sky beneath the furious gaze of the sun. They gathered, they circled, they returned—as they always returned; back to their little pagoda-like dove-cote, back to Mr. Trimmins's green-and-white green-house with its ripening tomatoes.

Her hat-pin between her teeth, Nora decided that he really was a good sensible sort— that young Mr. Trimmins, in spite of his being such a sobersides and in spite of his knack with tomatoes and pigeons.

She pushed home the pin, and in a few minutes had slipped out into the blinding afternoon. The street was deserted. The opposite row of yellow brick houses sat roasting in the sun, as if they had been hollowed out of one lump of clay and now were crisp and finished. Some one was playing a hymn on a harmonium. The

sound of it intensified the heat fourfold. But Nora didn't mind the heat. She loved it. Yet still, as she hastened on, with a steady clack-clack-clack of her best shoes on the glinting flagstones, something in her mind was doing its utmost to persuade her to turn back. But no; the full red lips closed more firmly; the sensible thing to do was to face things out. And on she went.

At the end of the next street she boarded a tram, and edged herself in on to the hole-patterned seat immediately in front of a family of Sunday merry-makers—the father (with his little dark moustache), the mother (her ringed left-hand pressed close against the bag she carried), and their three small children in a row beside them —six, four, and two—with completely motionless bodies, and intensely active red-brown eyes.

It was stuffy in the tram. Nora watched the stagnant shut-up shops go by—the butcher's, the draper's, the dairy, the fried-fish shop. *The Admiral Napier*—with its padlocked brown doors—suggested a frivolous attempt at disguising itself as a morgue; its upper paint a leprous grey. The confectioners' were open, though; and so were the tobacconists! She could see the boys, squatting on stools in their Sunday clothes, eating ices; and Mr. Jobson in his shirt-sleeves leaning over the last of his Sunday newspapers, smoking one of his own cigars. 'Triple murder in Kensal Green. Blood-stained chopper found.' 'Well-known Peer charged with Bigamy.' The placards were always exciting on Sundays. Nora's sliding dark-blue eyes snatched at their novelties as the tram in its steel grooves lurched on. It was the world she was used to; it intensely interested her.

But when at length she reached the Ponds—their green shelving banks shaded with lofty, bowering willows, green and silver in the motionless sunlit air—they were all but deserted. And at first glimpse of them Nora sighed. Just that one deep draught of sweeter air had filled her lungs, stilled her mind, set her heart beating. Her dark eyes had become almost as placid and absent as her father's. The water lay there, unruffled by even the faintest motion of the air, and blue as a plate beneath the sky. On the farther bank, but so far away their shrill voices sounded not much louder than starlings', a swarm of small boys were disporting themselves; some shying stones into the water, while two or three of them were drying themselves in the sun, small, lean creatures, standing mother-naked under the bowl of the sky on the green turf.

And Nora softly turned her eyes towards her tree. This, too, was a willow, many years older than most of its companions, and in part devoured and hollowed by rot. It leaned far out over the water from its few feet of bank. And, as she looked at it, the complete experience of the night before flooded back into her mind.

It wasn't as if it had been her first nocturnal visit. This, indeed, was one of Nora's own few secret resorts. She was 'friends' with the place. She had paddled in its shallows, with her school-mates, when quite a little girl. She knew its dangers; had been warned of them again and again. How then could she have been so stupid, so idiotic? To have stooped there daydreaming in the starry darkness, leaning so far over, with the perfectly ridiculous intention of trying to see her face in the dark water—the folly of it! As if to bid it goodbye! It would have served her right to have fallen in for good and all. What actually *had* happened—nothing so tragic —had happened in the twinkling of an eye.

Either in sheer absent-mindedness, or because she had been startled suddenly by the squawking of a little owl in the branches over her head, her fingers had slipped, and in she had gone—down, down, like a stone, into the cold, greedy, caressing water. And, in an instant or two, though it had seemed an age, and an age crammed with a wild incoherent disturbing dream, she had come up again, panting, terrified, clutching; trembling, shuddering, but safe.

And it was then—as if it were hovering in the darkness of the air—that that strange phantom face had appeared. She had found herself gazing straight up into it, though whether, with the water streaming from her hair, her eyes were open or shut, she could not remember. And through

those few everlasting moments, the face had stayed there, lit faintly as if by some light of its own, smiling, seraphic, unchanging, the eyes faintly luminous, the cheek narrowing softly to the chin, the hair drawn gently back from the brows.

And then, none too easily, Nora had pulled herself out, up on to the bank, had sat there, exhausted a while, to recover her breath and her wits. And then, having wrung some of the water out of her clothes, she had hurried off home by as dark a route as she knew, and so up to her bedroom. Her mother had been ironing in the kitchen when she left home. One of the flat-irons still sat cooling on the scorch-patterned ironing-sheet, beside its holder. Nora had glanced at it as she came in. And like everything else in the kitchen, it seemed to be in collusion with her—and to be professing it! '*We* know; it's over now; but don't be afraid; *we'll* say nothing.'

None the less Mrs. Hopper's sharp eyes had instantly noticed the change of clothes. 'I thought you said George wasn't coming tonight? You haven't put a plate for him.' And Nora, without a word, had gone to the dresser to fetch one.

Why had she prevaricated? What was there to conceal? She didn't mind her mother. Why hadn't she confessed straight out that like a fool she had fallen into the water, and so had changed her clothes? To tell the truth was as much a habit with her as to wash her face in the morning and to do her hair. And she had looked back at her mother, as if she had been accustomed to telling lies all her life—shameless, brazen. Yet even while she did so, she had been perfectly conscious of that faintly outlined face still haunting memory and mind. And it seemed to have no more connection with her mother's, no more connection with telling the truth, and living one's ordinary life than—well, Nora had no comparison.

A young man and a young woman were now straying hand in hand aimlessly and vacantly in her direction along the bank of the Pond. The three small boys were squatting on the green grass in their shirts. The sun had descended a little in its narrowing autumnal arc. Nora, after yet another fleeting half-glance at the scene spread out before her, turned and hastened home.

Sunday tea was never a talkative meal. Unlike her husband, Mrs. Hopper was a heavy sleeper after meals, and invariably stumped down from her bedroom, flushed and staring, and with sleep-glazed eyes, like a gently gaping fish. This afternoon, the meal was briefer than usual. There was supper to get. And Uncle Ben had a critical eye and a fastidious palate. But there's nothing like getting busy and working hard at whatever comes next, to prevent one's mind from brooding on what one is trying not to remember. Nora even sang over the peeling of the potatoes, and Mrs. Hopper wondered, on hearing her, why when she herself was young, she had been so squeamish, so strait-laced. Alf had been a good husband as husbands go, but there are all kinds of men.

In spite of her mother's rather cantankerous snort at the arrangement, Nora seated herself between her father and Aunt Emma at the supper-table. But Mrs. Hopper was a woman as easily placated as she was put out; and her hospitality was second-nature to her. 'There's Alf, now,' she would explain. 'He can't be anywhere but he's alone. He can't be anywhere but cooped up in his shell. Not me! Give me faces; give me company. I'd mope my head off with nobody to see.'

There was no doubt of it. The small round table, with its cold roast leg of mutton, its steak and kidney pie, pickles and beetroot, and glass and cutlery, and the china lamp in the middle, was packed as close with humanity as chairs would allow. They might be animals round the table. Yet Mr. Hopper merely sat quietly smiling there, and looking as much alone as if he were Robinson Crusoe on his desert island.

Uncle Ben, however, having assured himself that his sister-in-law hadn't forgotten his distaste for bottled beer and his 'pongshong' for whisky, had lost no time in keeping up his reputation as a wag. And, with Aunt Emma for flattering ally, and Miss Mullings, a new victim so far as he was concerned—quiet but appreciative—for audience, there was soon an unceasing roar of talk and laughter. And as naturally

as flies round a chandelier, it had circled round the guest of the evening—the doomed bachelor, the greenhorn of matrimony, the wise-crack's easiest cockshy—George. George was solid; George was a stayer; a bit thick-headed, if you like, but none the worse for that perhaps when life wields so clumsy a club and cracks a sensitive skull as easily as a steam-hammer cracks eggs. George was *there*; to bear the brunt, to play the butt, the future bridegroom! And George, in his starched collar and 'neat' pepper-and-salt suit, had met every sally with unfailing good-humour, even though, with his head bent forward a little and dark brown eyes slightly bulging, he resembled the while a bullock staring out of a cattle-truck.

Uncle Ben had the richest stock of jokes for all occasions—from a christening to a funeral. But his marrowiest were on the subject of widows, mothers-in-law, and young people in love.

'Lor', now, Ben,' Mrs. Hopper had come to the rescue at last, 'give him a chance; give him a chance!' With a hiccup of ribald amusement and a sigh of exhaustion, she wiped away the tears from her eyes.

'Chance!' retorted Uncle Ben, turning his long nose in her direction. 'What's he want with chances? Hasn't he had his chance, and hasn't he taken it? . . . And won't he?'

George shifted an inch or two on his chair.

'He don't want no chances,' Aunt Em intervened, drawing her hand across her mouth. 'He's happy enough, *I* can see, and so would any young man be.'

'What I say is,' said Uncle Ben, with extraordinary solemnity, and almost squinting at his friends from eyes that were, even at ordinary moments, formidably close together, 'what I say is, he's joined the old redoubtables. He's taken the plunge—and come up smiling.' He looked firmly at the tumbler in his hand.

'Anybody, to hear that, Mr. Hopper,' Miss Mullings insinuated, 'would suppose that a journey to the altar was no better than a young couple going to their execution.'

'Altar, did you say, Miss Mullings, or halter?' inquired Uncle Ben punctiliously. 'And what, might I ask you, does anybody expect at an execution? Why, to lose your head! Aye, and to have it picked up out of the sawdust before the trickling lids are down over the eyes. When I think of our young friends on that track—well, there—'his voice sank into a plangent whisper and he emptied his glass, 'my heart bleeds for them.'

'Pull the long bow, you do,' Mrs. Hopper expostulated. 'Why if it weren't telling secrets, I recollect a time, Ben, when you as near as possible fell into the trap yourself; and a nice plump young widow, too, though I'm not too sure all that hair was her own.'

Mr. Hopper, who had been steadily and quietly eating the while, at this, gently slid his eyes in his brother's direction, and smiled. It was like a watery glint of sunlight in a raining sky.

'That,' retorted Uncle Ben imperturbably, 'is what might look to be a bull's-eye. But, "twice shy" is my rendering of it. I read the other day, in an old book I came across, of two islands out in the East there, three hundred miles apart. Two islands: one inhabited by nothing but men, and the other by—well, in short—women. So I know where *I'm* going to when I die.'

'But which, Mr. Hopper?' murmured Miss Mullings.

Uncle Ben threw up his two knuckly hands. 'Kamerad! Kamerad!' he cried. 'Now George, here . . .' he began again.

George pushed his chin a little further over his stiff collar; and swallowed.

'There's some of us not so easily taken in,' he muttered thickly. 'What *I* say is, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.'

The worm had turned, but at the sound of his voice, Nora had begun hastily collecting the dirty plates together in preparation for the plum tart and custard and a plum-pudding that Mrs. Hopper, since the Christmas before, had faithfully reserved for whatever occasion Providence might propose.

And it was not until after the supper dishes had been cleared away, and Uncle Ben—who didn't think even as much as small beer of 'all this Vodzveal'—had entertained the company with a few out of

his familiar repertory of songs, that the attention of the little party suddenly centred itself on Nora. From her brief solitude in the scullery she had slipped back into the room again and seated herself beside her father. His hand had crept out and gently clasped her own for a moment, where it lay in her lap, palm upwards, on her knee.

Aunt Emma, at the same moment, with a curious, crab-like movement, had slipped from her stool at the old rose-wood, silk-pleated piano, and Uncle Ben, whose third song had not been received with precisely the volume of applause to which he was accustomed, had observed this furtive little caress.

'Now, if I was a goose,' he cried gallantly, 'there's one young lady present which I don't believe could say "Bo!" to me, nohow. What do *you* think, pretty Miss Pensive, now, with them dark eyes?'

Mrs. Hopper who, up to this moment, had seemed to be completely unaware of her daughter's small share in the evening's entertainment, suddenly lost patience.

'God's sake! She's sat there, dumb as an image, all the blessed evening.. What's wrong with you, girl?'

At this, George's eyes, which had been as steadily fixed on his beloved as a bullock's in a truck on a drift of green pasture at the railroad's edge, turned heavily away, while a dull red mounted up into his naturally dusky face.

'*I'm* all right, mother,' said Nora.

She was alone in the world again; for at first sound of Mrs. Hopper's rebuke, Mr. Hopper had withdrawn his hand.

'If you was "all right" as you call it,' retorted Mrs. Hopper, 'you'd prove you had a tongue in your head. She's been like this for days together,' she explained to Aunt Emma. 'I can't think what's come over the child.'

'Maybe she's not feeling quite the thing,' Miss Mullings suggested sympathetically.

'Now then, George! What about it?' challenged Uncle Ben, in full tilt again at the dragon.

Nora had pushed herself more securely into her chair. 'I don't mind being laughed at, not a bit,' she began. 'Not myself. If I couldn't stand being laughed at, I'd go into a home for the feeble-minded. But I don't believe even you, Uncle Ben, would be talking quite so free if you'd been nearly drowned last night.'

The strange dismal word resounded through the little lamplit room like the call of a bugle. Complete silence fell. Uncle Ben gaped where he stood. Then Mrs. Hopper crossed her legs viciously, and clasped her hands together.

'What kind of tale are you telling of us now?' she cried angrily.

Nora stared steadily into her mother's face. 'I said drowned mother. I went out for a walk last night to the Ponds. . . It's nobody else's business—and I fell in.'

'Fell in, my dear?' Mr. Hopper's voice rang sweet as a bell in the midst of the baa-ings of a flock of sheep.

'Yes, Dad, and went clean under, too. Miles! It's deep there. But it was nothing to worry about. I soon scrambled out. But naturally,' she drew her hand over her forehead, 'it's given me a bit of a headache, perhaps.'

'What I wouldn't wonder at, my fine lady,' cried her mother, 'is if you aren't in bed, come tomorrow morning with a raging cold or inflamation of the lungs or something of that sort. Trapesing back all that way through the streets like a cod in a fishmonger's shop! *I* don't know what they'll think of you. And not to say a single word to your mother neither!'

'Feel my hand, Dad,' said Nora. 'That's cool enough, isn't it? There's nothing wrong with *me*, Mother. And I came by the back ways. It's when everybody begins talking, and I don't see why, and you all keep on at George—why, it makes *everything* look silly. What *can't* be made to look silly? There's always those who'll laugh. But I'd rather not say anything more about it.'

'Now, what I say,' Uncle Ben as usual pranced gallantly to the rescue, 'what I say is,' he repeated, his two cold small eyes as grey-blue as agates on either side his long inquisitive nose, 'is that's what they call a parable. Didn't I say an hour ago that George here had taken the plunge, and come up smiling? And what's Nora done else! *She* won't hurt. Bless you! Strong, healthy young creature like that, Polly. None of your lacksidaisical young

ladies that die of pneumonia from a draught not strong enough to blow the powder off their noses. She's all right. There now, Polly, she's all right. The prettiest of chips from the handsomest of blocks.' He pushed himself in on to the little sofa beside his sister-in-law, and put his arm round her waist.

'Oh, you old fool!' retorted Mrs. Hopper with amiable scorn, flinging his hand aside. 'You are all fat, and nothing to fry! I've no patience with you.'

But the position was saved, and Nora's only penalty was a good-sized couple of spoonfuls of Uncle Ben's whisky, in half a tumbler of scalding hot water.

'If you insist on gadding about by yourself in the dark, my girl, and having cold baths in public, you must take the consequences,' said Mrs. Hopper, as she dropped two lumps of sugar into the steam.

Nora slipped out after George into the dusky passage.

'Honest, Nora,' he breathed hoarsely into her ear, 'you're not feeling *ill*?'

'Ill! Not me. I'll come along with you, George. Keep quiet. Stay *there*. I won't be a minute.' She hastened up to her room. It was filled with a clear still darkening twilight. Her face glowed softly in the glass; and she could see dove-cote and green-house in the dark-shadowed garden below, as plainly as if they had been carved by magic out of mystery for the scene of a play. She paused in marvel of it a moment, then pulled on her hat and hurried softly out again. And George was waiting for her where she had left him. Like the Lion on the Brewery he hadn't moved the fraction of an inch.

'I like coming out when no one knows anything about it,' she whispered, as he opened the door. 'I'm tired of all that, George.'

Not even the faintest or fleeciest of clouds showed in the sky above the double row of small brick houses in the empty street; and the air was crisp and cold—as if the small hours might bring a tang of frost. A waning moon was rising in the west, shedding her faint light into the crystalline, grey-blue sky.

The two of them walked on in silence until they reached the end of the street. A few hundred yards beyond the next, the branches of plane-trees jutted out at right angles from their parti-coloured boles above the asphalt walks of the 'Recreation Ground'. There was a faint musty odour in the air, mingled with that of autumnal flowers, beginning now to go to seed, in the borders around them.

'Honest, Nora, did you really fall into the Pond?' George asked. His voice still sounded slightly thick and inhuman, as if an animal were attempting to converse.

'You didn't think I was telling a lie, George?'

'I didn't think nothing about it, except you never told me. Do you often go out alone?'

Nora's breast rose beneath her jacket. 'You *know* I often go out alone. And why shouldn't I? I like being alone. I shall always want to be alone when—when I want to be. There's no harm in that, that I can see. I can take care of myself. Mother just talks. She wants things to go as *she* wants them to go.'

'You might have been drowned in that Pond. It's a good seven feet deep near that upper bank. If that's what you call going out alone, why . . .'

'But I didn't get drowned, or I wouldn't be here now. As if catching cold and that stuff—why, what about them sillies that break the ice in the Serpentine all through the winter? And it wasn't the falling into the Pond that I was thinking about. It wasn't that at all.'

'If you don't want to tell me anything, I don't know as how I want to hear it,' mumbled the young man in his billycock hat.

'Oh lor', George, for heaven's sake! There's a seat. Let's sit down.'

The two of them seated themselves, a few inches coldly apart, in a dusk cast by a neighbouring lamp-post and by the increasing luminousness of the moon.

'When in the dark I went down into that Pond, George—and I *want* to tell you about it—it was not like what they say about such things. I seemed to be falling into an enormous black pit, and it seemed it would never end. But it wasn't, as they say, just *memories* that came back to me. There were horrible eyes staring at me, and voices shouting. No, not *at* me; but

together, *across*. And when at last I came up again, and managed to breathe and to see a little, I was just clutching at anything and . . . it was a lucky thing that stubby root was there.'

But George had guessed, in some obscure groping fashion of his own, that this was not the end, not even the important part of Nora's confession. He refused to be sympathetic; sat stiff as a ramrod, staring straight in front of him under the brim of his hat. 'You had no call to be there alone at that time of night. You had no call to be doing things secret-like.'

Nora listened, her knees pressed tight together, her lips set hard. There would be time to argue when she had finished what she wished to say.

'But it wasn't just that that I'm trying to tell you. There isn't anything in that. It was what happened . . . Then.'

George's mouth opened a little; his face groped round in her direction.

'It was the face I saw that won't . . . I keep on seeing it. I don't know how to explain. It was while, knowing I was safe, I was floating there in the water. It was there, above, looking at me; smiling at me, as if—' her speech had become more and more animated—'what I mean is, it wasn't a dream, it wasn't in my head, in my *mind*, as you might say. It wasn't *fancy*.' The clear young voice trembled, as if in triumph at the word. 'I know that. It was outside, *there*, a little above me, before my very eyes. I saw it, George, as I hung there in the water, and I wasn't excited, or scared, or struggling any more; I looked through my eyes, straight up at it. And by then I think the moon must have come out of the clouds. It was all silver on the water. And that face there—smiling at me. It seemed, as you might say, I had gone in under a dark dreadful tunnel, and come out the other side.'

'Come out on what other side?' the young man blurted.

'Why, the other side—' Nora lifted her hand, as if she could make a pattern of what she intended in the air—'the other side of all this, I mean. It was real. And yet it wasn't real. You might almost have been a child, it was so clear, so simple. And it's never left me. It's made everything different. You see, George, and oh, I *know* it sounds ridiculous—it was something to do with me myself.' She stooped forward over her lap, staring hard at the asphalt beneath her foot. 'And I don't know as how I've ever seen anything that. . .' The square, young, ardent face turned sidelong a little—and lit with a vague, elusive smile he had never seen before—solemnly challenged the young man: 'You aren't trying to help me much!'

George once more shifted uneasily in his seat.

'You told me to shut my mouth a minute ago. So I'm *keeping* it shut. You say you'd never seen him before?'

Nora burst out laughing. She listened to herself laughing—as carefree as a green wood-pecker. 'Seen *him* before! Oh, George! *Him*! I clean don't know what you're talking about! I never thought of it as being a him, and I didn't say it was, either. I've had enough of those claptrap islands of Uncle Ben's this evening, and all that widow talk, and I should have thought you had too. As if there wasn't anything but hes and shes to sniff and snigger about; as if there was nothing but silly jokes about just two people like you and me getting married and all that. I don't know how they come to it, *that* I don't. What *I'm* saying is—', yet again the challenge rang out almost shrilly, 'that's what I saw, and keep on seeing. And, I'm asking you, George, why shouldn't I? As if I cared what people think of me—as long as it's my own self. Who has any right, I should like to know, to say anything about what happens in anybody's *mind*?'

She looked away, paused, then turned almost tenderly to the young man.

'Oh, George, if only I could make *you* see it, too! I don't believe as you'd ever care to look at me again! There's pictures; but not like that. *I'm* nothing.'

'And yet,' cried the rational young man, 'only a minute or two ago, on this very seat here, you were just making fools of us all for being hes and shes. As if that old Nosey! . . . I can't make out what you're getting at, and—' he gulped—'I don't know as how really I *want* to.'

His voice died away. The earthy cold night air, having been rent asunder by its

stridency, welled back unwounded, unreceptive. Not a soul was in sight, and that hastening footstep beyond the clustering trees might be nothing but a phantasm's for all that was actually visible.

Nora gazed vacantly. She was perfectly at ease, perfectly happy. All would come right. It was curious, indeed, when things looked so muddled and gloomy, that she should be conscious how strong and how free she felt in her body. It seemed that nothing she would ever attempt to do again could possibly fret or weary her—that she was capable of an infinitude of patience, of energy, and labour. But for the moment she must grope along gently and quietly.

'*This* is what I mean, George,' she said, 'if you will try and be a little patient. Did you ever see *any*thing as if you had never *really* seen it before? I mean, more beautiful, as they say; more as though there was a sort of secret between you and it? Why, this light here now, George, on this old plank, on the wood; look at that! Do you see? There are two kinds of shadows of the leaves. They are like curious hands, webbed, like duck's feet. And you can hardly tell where the dark and where the light begins. It's the moon and the lamp there; shining together: and here are you and me sitting here, and we don't know where it all comes from or what it all means. It's so still, George. I feel I could escape out of my body for ever and ever. Not that I want to: I'm too strong for that. But *that's* what I mean when I think about the face I'm telling you of. Only, much, much more. It will all fade away and go, of course, but—' she turned eagerly, 'supposing I'd sunk right down into that Pond again, under the willow trees, and my body had stayed there—well, I shouldn't be here now, talking to you, should I, George?'

'All I can say is,' retorted the young man bitterly, 'it's lucky your *mother* isn't hearing what you are saying.'

'I'm leaving Mother out now,' Nora said. 'But I believe Father would understand a little what I mean. We don't *know*, George. You can't say that if I'd gone then, I'd be the same as I am now. I don't believe it. I don't believe that what I was *then*, sinking down as if for ever into that dark and cold and then looking up calm and peaceful at what was waiting there for me—is what I was when I was sitting there just now hearing Uncle Ben sing that silly jazz, leering and going on like that, and all. He's soured—Uncle Ben. And he doesn't want to show it.'

'I don't see as how the songs were particularly silly, as you call it,' George lied. 'There's some like to take a high-and-mighty view.'

'Well, never mind, George, they were,' Nora said. 'I didn't mean to be high and mighty; only just the truth. And it doesn't matter either way. If you want me, George, I suppose you've got to have all of me, but if you don't know what's there, you can't blame me if some of it's kept back. No, I don't mean that at all. *No* one can ever have *all* of anybody. I mean, now and then when I think of it, I'm almost sorry I didn't not come back last night. I'd *like* to be where that face came from. Why shouldn't I, if it was my own? You can call it just a silly dream or you can call it a nightmare, if you like. What's words? It's what it meant to me that matters most, and if you can't put up with me, George, I don't know what we *shall* do.'

Nora hadn't suspected that the nerves of the young man beside her were quite so near the snapping point. The only sound he uttered was a sort of breathless grunt as he stooped forward, his elbows on his knees, and hid his face in his hands, thrusting back his hard, round hat on his neatly oiled hair, as he did so.

'I don't know by what right—' Nora looked at him and looked again. 'I don't know by what right you're taking what I've said like that, George. I needn't have told you at all.'

'What I don't follow,' replied a stubborn almost blubbering voice, 'is why anybody should want to hush up anything about their own face. How could it have been more lovely-like if it *was* yours?'

'You didn't mean that so nice as it sounds. Haven't *you*—don't you carry about any picture of yourself better than the reflections of what you see in a glass? And even that's often better than real. You don't think, George, surely, it's just your *face* I love—and looking like that

either! Why it's you; you; what perhaps nobody else sees at all. We don't know where we come from, do we. . .?

'Keep your secrets,' groaned the young man. 'And I'll keep mine.'

'If you call *that* secrets, George,' she flamed, 'then all I can say is, you're treating me mean. But, oh, you don't seem to see it. I've never been so happy as I was all the time when I was alone today sitting up there in my bedroom and you with your pigeons and the sunlight and all. And I thought—I thought perhaps you might understand . . . I don't think I wish to be sitting here any more like this, now. We'll go home.'

They walked in silence together till they reached the turn of the street, and then Nora slipped her firm hand into George's hard square one as he stalked along beside her. And so they arrived at No. 29. The lights had been put out in the sitting-room. Not a gleam showed between the Venetian blinds, but the moon had now begun to shine full on Allenbury Street. They came to a standstill. Nora drew her hand away, lifted her face, and looked up at the solitary glaring satellite.

'Won't you say a single word?' George breathed huskily. 'You aren't going to leave me like that?'

Nora stooped forward, the hard brim of her young man's hat biting deep into her cheek as she did so.

'I don't believe as you're anything more than a child, George, when all's said. Are you jealous because my face is more lovely than *you'll* ever see it? *My* face! Lord!'

'You can't marry a child,' George almost sobbed. 'Promise, Nora, promise—'

Nora drew back. 'I'll never promise a single thing,' she retaliated. 'As if you don't know that whatever was *not* me wouldn't just shed off like—like the skin from an onion. I'll just keep what I'll keep. And what I meant was, I'm glad to be back, but I'm gladder still to know . . .' She stared at the moon, squeezed the hard hand clutched in hers, but could get no further. And in less than a minute the door had closed behind her.

And George, a few minute drops of dew on his face, having surveyed the glittering curtained windows, presently went on, alone with his shadow, in his dark clothes and his round-topped hat, along the narrow, vast-skied vacant, moon-glossed street.

SUNSET

The distance gives a world in miniature:
A savage place of round and pointed hills
Cut out in light within the cloudbreak. There
Tornadoes suck the towns and haggard ills
Point finger-posts to heaven; prophets tread air
Above the cross-roads; phœnix-like, their wills
Sweep blazing through the valley; the crooked heir
Marches his slaves to little rooms and kills.
It could not happen here. In this soft light
Sheep nod in shade like loaves of bread; the orchid
Completes her hooded labour and the bird
His note of praise. All move towards delight:
The broom, the plough, the schoolboy. This is the dance,
And evening. But colours rise, the hills advance!

DAVID CAMPBELL

NOTES ON THE FAIRY PICTURES OF RICHARD DOYLE

P. M. FITZGERALD

THE fairy pictures of Richard Doyle, so much prized in their day, have fallen into disrepute. They were mostly drawn in the later part of his life when his powers were declining, and he had, in any case, the ill-luck to be eclipsed by the great men of the sixties, one of the finest school of black-and-white illustrators that there has ever been. These pictures of Doyle's, however, were largely drawn to please children, and they still do please them; and, what is more important, they have created, probably without our knowing it, an archetype, so that the image of a fairy in our minds is the fairy of Doyle and his countless imitators.

She is to be found, not in his earlier work such as *The Juvenile Calendar and Zodiac of Flowers*, or *The King of the Golden River*, although these do contain some of his very best decorations and illustrations, but in Planché's *An Old Fairy Tale Told Anew* (Routledge 1865)—the tale is the Sleeping Beauty—and *The Princess Nobody* (Longmans 1884). In both cases the authors were handed the sets of drawings and asked to write the story round them, and very difficult they found it. Andrew Lang, who did *The Princess Nobody*, was hampered by the fact that *his* illustrations had already been used by Longmans for Allingham's *In Fairy Land*, 1870. Planché, always workmanlike, frankly ended his introduction:

> But peace, thou garrulous old man
> Well-nigh a child again, indeed!
> Forbear these memories to scan,
> And briefly with thy task proceed:
> The flattering task, to be a foil
> To the fine pencil of a Doyle . . .

Both, however, are charming books, while the three published by Deans in 1871, *The Feast of the Dwarfs*, *Fortune's Favourite* and *Snow White and Rosy Red*, are miserable affairs, and very crudely coloured. It is in the *Princess Nobody*, above all, that we find the apotheosis of the fairy.

We recognise her at once. Her eyes are immense and heavy-lidded, her head a little too large for her body. How well Doyle understood the charm of this slight distortion! (as did Tenniel, for much of Alice's appeal lies in her head being always drawn a little too big). Her hair, parted in the middle, flows down thick and straight, the true early pre-Raphaelite hair, and it is often crowned with flowers and leaves.[1]

Her dress, although Doyle was weak on drapery, is somewhere between the white sylph-like costumes of the Romantic ballet and the 'white nightgown' period. (Laurence Housman said that George Macdonald invented, in *At the Back of the North Wind*, 'as a new form of literature the adventures of a child in his night-gown.') There is about her an indescribable air of belonging to a borderland between sleeping and waking, where the dreaming brain glimpses beauty before it flashes into darkness.

This delightful being Doyle placed in a background of butterflies, mischievous elves, drops of dew, flowers shaken like bells, etc., all of which had been laid down on general lines by Shakespeare, but had had to wait almost three hundred years for an illustrator. But if you look at them a

[1] Some of Fuseli's drawings show the full horror of the opposite distortion—tiny plumed heads on the bodies of giantesses

BLANCHE, COUNTESS OF AIRLIE *From an oil painting at Cortachy Castle*

Prince Comical and the Queen of Mushroom Land — *From* The Princess Nobody

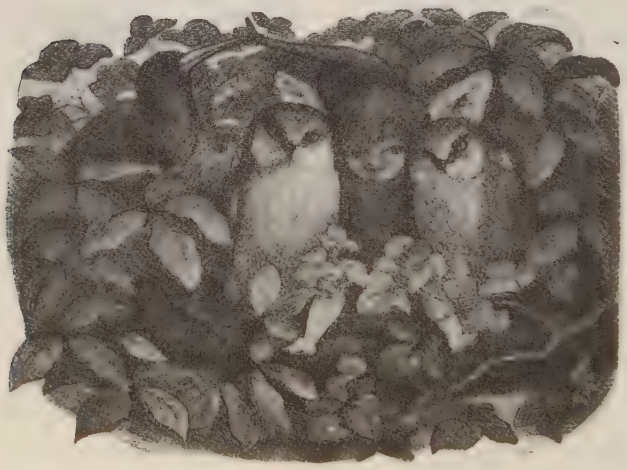

Illustration from The Princess Nobody

little more closely, you will notice a disturbing element about these drawings which the stories do nothing to explain. It has been called mystical, but it is not quite that. The fairies themselves are often looking away, with a strange, half-startled expression. A favourite subject is a bloated and distorted old king surrounded with young maidens. Elves, birds and butterflies are involved in a perpetual skirmish, tweaking and tormenting each other, raiding nests, pecking babies, pushing one another from precarious holds on the stalks of flowers and (in *The Prince of the Glow Worms*) attacking each other with tiny daggers. Peace only comes at night-time under a huge luminous moon, or when all the denizens are strung out in a fantastic procession.

Why did Doyle, when he was approaching middle age, create this not quite normal world of enchantment, very different in atmosphere from the brisk elves and *corps de ballet* fairies of his masterpiece, the cover of *Punch*? I think it was an escape from the bitterness of a life which had been a mixture of success and grave disappointment.

The success came very early. It is a commonplace to say that Doyle never drew better than when he was a schoolboy of fifteen. His father (the caricaturist H.B.) did not believe in formal art training—perhaps unfortunately, since Doyle never learned to paint—but trained his children in draughtsmanship and exact observation. Richard's famous Journal (not published till 1885) was undertaken as a kind of exercise. There are sketches in it of him sitting with his brothers and sisters round the table with its chenille cloth, in the circle of light from the oil lamp, copying and re-copying the pages before submitting them to his father whom he longed to please. They were, however, labours of love, exquisitely spirited miniatures of crowds, military reviews with prancing horses, family scenes, street scenes and all varieties of grotesque little men, together with those decorative initials which (like Gothic pew-heads) were a kind of careless by-product of the rich art of the period. His speciality was the vivid expressions on each of the tiny faces (Landseer was one of his favourite artists because each dog was drawn with a different expression).

Richard, in short, had 'fancy'. His fancy runs riot in another unpublished notebook done at about this time, *Dick Kitkat's Book of Nonsense*, where the tiny grotesques, especially those with animal heads, approach nightmare. He does, indeed, often complain humorously about his dreams.

Dick Doyle's Dream. *From his Journal of the Year 1840*

The Triumphant Entry; A Fairy-Tale Pageant

Water-colour
Reproduced by the courtesy of the Director of the National Gallery of Ireland

Opening Day at the Royal Academy, 1840 — *From Journal of the Year 1840*

Doyle's inventive genius (it was nothing less) was absolutely fitted for a public which delighted in variety, diversity, diablerie, overcrowding and everything that is summed up in the words 'old curiosity shop'. His first book, *The Eglinton Tournament*, was published when he was only sixteen, and he joined the staff of *Punch* two years later. But, true to the destiny of humourists, he had secret unhappinesses which must be mentioned only rarely.

In the first place, he was a strict Roman Catholic at a time when it was still not easy to be a Catholic in London. Something of what this meant to him, as a boy, can be guessed from his *Diary* for 5 November 1840: *Thursday 5th.* I was awoke this morning by the frightful screams which usually accompany Guys and while the younger branches of the family rushed with frantic eagerness to obtain a view of the triumphal procession I who have long since lost a taste for such-like historical recollections lay calmly in bed. . . Later in the day as I was crossing Berkley Square on my way to the British Gallery, an imposing sight presents itself, a Guy placed gracefully upon the back of a donkey, back to back with a novel creature who might have passed for some distant relation of Punch, or even of Judy, but was, I believe, intended to represent the Pope. The sarcasm here conveyed was so biting that I quitted the ground instantly and proceeded to the British Institution. . .' —well conveying the humiliation and bewilderment of a boy who has ceased to be a child and is just beginning to understand the terms the world offers him. All the more credit to Doyle that in 1850 he resigned from the staff of *Punch* as a protest against its anti-papal campaign. It was a gesture that meant a very great personal sacrifice, since his election to the staff (at the age of eighteen) had meant that he had reached the very top of the profession. But the question of the Catholic hierarchy, and the Popes in triple crown, petticoats and button boots, etc., portrayed in the demoniac energy of the *Punch* cartoons, turned the scale for him. He would have liked to stay; Thackeray, his friend always, begged him to do so, but he felt he must go, and he did.[1]

Then again there is no doubt that Doyle would have liked to win fame as a serious painter. As a boy he had slaved away at battle pieces and huge canvases of King Alfred and Quentin Durward, and it was almost by chance that he became a comic artist. Commissions came for him—he was one of a large family, not particularly well off, and one thing led to another until his line of work was established. But that is not to say his early ambitions were forgotten. We must remember that this was

[1]Doyle also refused a commission to illustrate *Gulliver's Travels* because of their indecency

the time when Victorian painters were beginning to live *en prince*. Although the days were not reached when Millais would earn £30,000 a year and Herkomer would sweep down to find his palette laid out for him by adoring lady pupils, still in the '50s and '60s the rewards were already high. Crowds gathered outside the Royal Academy on opening day and rushed in when the doors opened, trampling each other underfoot, and a visit to the studio of an historical painter was a serious affair.

A comic illustrator, no matter how successful, could not be expected to receive homage of this kind.

All this was the more important because Doyle cared very much for 'dining out'. There was not a tinge of the snob about him, but he gloried in the social life of his day which took place as if on a stage, a brilliant dissolving scene which was closely watched and expertly criticised by the lower classes and the multitudes who were 'not asked'. He loved parties because he had always been excited by pageants and spectacles of all kinds. He would stand quietly in a corner by the wall, rubbing one foot against the other, holding his gibus in his hand, while the company swept past him, remorselessly headed for the refreshment room. Or sometimes he would stay all evening in the doorway, where he could get a two-way view without the embarrassment of being much noticed.

Doyle, of course, scored some of his greatest successes with scenes from society, drawn in his mock mediaeval 'outline manner'. And yet it is here that the inner strain and tension of his life begin to show most clearly. It is almost shocking to compare *Manners and Customs of ye Englyshe* (1849) with *Birds Eye Views of Society* drawn fifteen years later. The *Manners and Customs*, with its guileless little figures in top-hats and crinolines, has a charm which is quite irresistible and a tremendous enjoyment of the absurdities of social life. In the *Birds Eye Views* these same figures are bloated and darkened, the faces have mostly a cruel expression and the dances and receptions appear, as in Rowlandson's prints, to be a kind of struggle for existence. There is, also, a tendency to crowd in a bewildering number of figures, all crushed pell-mell but having no real connection with each other, which is typical of such artists as Bosch, Martin and the lunatic Richard Dadds, and which, certainly, points to some overwhelming inner disturbance.

I do not want to over-elaborate this point for fear of giving the impression that Doyle was unhinged, an absurd idea to connect with this gentlest of men, of whom it was said at the end of his life (when he was much neglected and had ceased to go out into society) that 'he left no impression beyond that of a man who was rather tired.' There was, however, one more disappointment in Doyle's life, the keenest of all, the keenest, perhaps, that anyone could suffer. He fell in love with a woman he could never hope to marry, or indeed to meet very often. This was Blanche Airlie, second daughter of the redoubtable Lady Stanley of Alderley.

Lady Airlie's courtship and marriage will be remembered by every reader of Nancy Mitford's *The Stanleys of Alderley*. It begins there, with a letter from Lady Stanley's mother-in-law—'I do not rejoice in Blanche surrounded by *clever* men—it is setting up a character which seldom ends well for matrimony'—then comes the arrival of Airlie himself at Alderley, and complaints as to Blanche's whims and lack of politeness—'she rather talks to him as if he was to be civilised, she keeps giving him little passages to read which he gets through very much as he did the machinery at the Exhibition' (the date is 1851). After much exquisite uncertainty, Blanche accepted him one night after dinner—'she answered that she would try to make him happy, but she said her voice sounded cold and different to his.' The truth was, of course, that Blanche was doubtful about marrying a stupid man; and about a year after the wedding Mrs. Carlyle wrote in one of her letters of a visit she had paid with Blanche to a woman novelist, and how the 'romantic and not very wise young countess' sat on a low seat, gazing upwards —'I keeping silence till Blanche got on the subject of husbands who have married

women of superior minds to their own—and then I told Miss Mulock not to let that young lady talk nonsense about her husband to her—that her husband was quite a different person from what she led people to suppose!' People supposed, then, that the lovely Blanche was married to a stupid nobleman who could admire, but not appreciate her; who sometimes made a speech in the House and sometimes, possibly, took too much wine after she appeared in low spirits at times, though this was attributed by Lady Stanley to 'mooniness produced by reading incomprenensible poetry.' What could have been more inducive of helpless, hopeless adoration in a young artist whose heart was at her feet?

Nancy Mitford says that Blanche's nature was 'intellectual, cold and hard' and that she became a tartar in her old age, and, like her mother, a source of fear to her relations. On the other hand, the tradition in the Conan Doyle family is that she returned Richard's affection, though from a distance. There was, of course, never any question, even before the marriage, of Richard's declaring himself to Lady Stanley, pioneer of woman's education, strong manipulator of her family, and, as Palmerston declared, joint Chief Whip with her husband. He would sooner (to use his favourite word) have 'bust'. In a letter to his brother Charles, written from a country-house party,[1] he says: 'Blanche, now unfortunately Lady Airlie, was invited but could not come. When I tell you . . . that Lady Stanley told me her daughter would be "so sorry that she had not been there when she heard I was there" —when Lady Stanley made use of these words, I thought I should have bust.

'I, however, controlled my feelings and countenance by a powerful effort and succeeded in looking as if nothing was the matter. But little did that imperious woman know the workings of my innermost soul.'

Richard Doyle, then, was doomed to be one of those bachelors of the period who concealed their wounds with humorous shyness (for to be found out would be the greatest terror of all) and in spite of, or because of, what was hidden, produced the fantasy that delighted children. Charles Lamb (in this as in so many respects the first Victorian), Lear, Anderson, Wilhelm Busch, Lewis Carroll, whose first biographer hinted at the 'shadow' across his life, of which no more must ever be said—Doyle, then, joined their company, and in these later pictures entered a world which was already clearly mapped out in his head, a dewdrop world which for all its unearthly prettiness had cruel and tantalising echoes.

And we have, now, a glimpse of the Princess who ruled this country of the imagination: it is the lovely face of Blanche Airlie, with its round arched eyebrows, broad nose, exquisite mouth, and sparkling eyes almost hidden with the drooping lids. She is the Sleeping Beauty; she is the fairy who, across the rim of the moonlit mushroom, for ever confounds the hesitating prince. She has, perhaps, the expression 'produced by reading incomprehensible poetry', which irritated her mother, and struck to the heart of the helpless lover of beauty. It is a charming immortality.

[1]Quoted in Richard Doyle by Daria Hambourg (London Art and Technics: 1948)

IF

If not,
birth sows in vain,
death reaps.
The towered trees that stalk
horizon's edge,
and I,
together walk
A mountain ledge,
exposed to luck-flung winds,
to fall or stand.
If fall, then gone;
if stand ten times,
stiff pride exultant blinds.
Eleventh, blown.

If so,
all things were made
for good.
I walk the mountain shelf
cut off awhile,
subject
to my own self
each laboured mile.
I am a part of God,
God-constituted,
and with Him safe.
Make God myself
in love, I love forever;
if not, I hate.

HEDGES

A major poet,
A minor poet,
And a minimus.
Met by coincidence
In a bus.
The insolence
Of the great one
Was demonstrated by the fuss
He made, in order to look out
At the trees and hedges,
Which were, without doubt,
Very beautiful.
The minor, a handsome lout,
Was in stitches

At the foolish rapture
Of the other,
Who, in his efforts to capture
The inspiration of nature,
Had one elbow buried in his brother,
Who showed agony in every feature,
But was outdone
By the lady
With not one,
But two fat feet
Firmly wedged
Under the bard's heavy boot.
The minimus,
Whose face was often alleged
To resemble the back of a bus,
Slept in his place,
starting at every toot
Of the horn,
And was otherwise motionless,
Except for an occasional yawn.

After some time,
The great one
Wrapt in sublime
Thoughts, and in ecstasy,
Was forcibly ejected,
And broke a bone
In his fall.
Thus rejected,
He was borne to a hospital,
Muttering brokenly, by a tall
Strong policeman.
The lesser was now screaming
With glee,
And, in appearance seeming
More than tipsy, was taken into custody.
The least slept on.
And those near him,
Scarcely won
By his snores and groans,
Moved on.
He gradually slipped
Under the seat,
And, when the passengers
Were unshipped,
He was garaged
With the 'bus-fleet.

The three
In solitude,
Wrote each a poem:
Number one, about 'Hedges (viewed from a 'bus)',
Number two, about 'Hedges (viewed from a 'bus)',
Number three, about 'Hedges (viewed from a 'bus)'.

NEW BOOKS

THE DEAD SEAGULL

By George Barker. *John Lehmann.* 7s. 6d.

The dead seagull, symbol of symbolists, drops wounded to the ground again in this narrow, intense sea-storm in the crystal, a novel by a poet on the deepest motives of his heart. For George Barker, without question, I should say, the greatest love poet of our day, the writer of:

> Time will divide us, and the sea
> Wring its sad hands all day between;
> The autumn bring a change of scene.
> But always and for ever he
> At night will sleep and keep by me

is also obsessed with the curse that lust puts upon love, and with original sin. There is not only remorse in his poems but guilt, the overwhelming guilt of a romantic with a strict religious upbringing.

> The ache at the break of the heart
> Is nothing: a pearl knows this.
> What remains eternally intolerable is
> always
> The justice, the justice . . .

Another theme which recurs from poem to poem is the reproach of an innocent woman whose only fault is this (though it is an unforgivable one) that she has been injured. Another is the yet more terrible reproach of the unborn child.

The story of *The Dead Seagull*, then, is what might be expected: the confessions of a man who marries a young girl (they had known each other as schoolchildren and she was already expecting a baby) and ditches her for her best friend. The wife dies in childbirth. This we might expect, and we might expect also certain motives such as the face of the man spying behind the bush on the lovers and some others which occur in Barker's last poem, the *True Confession*. But could we expect the vivid characterisation put in, as it is in, a few lines? Or quite such humour, or rather, horrible amusingness? The unwelcome visitor, Jean Theokopolos (he only appears for a few pages and is one of the four characters in this beautifully economical book)—how is it that we know him, his dark shirt and thick eyebrows and carefully eccentric anecdotes—so well, too well, in such a short time? The writing, so condensed in the story and so lavish in the self-tormenting interludes, is skilful to a degree:

'The evening looped its cloths about the bedroom and the glass of milk on a small table looked like a huge pearl'.

'The invulnerable individuality, like a palace revolution, takes place behind doors that its own nature must keep closed. Sometimes a hand with a flag waves at a window, but soon disappears—an altruistic action has been assassinated. Nor could it ever have succeeded'.

'Marsden sits for hours, staring out of the open French window; the unwashed dishes build up in the sink, the bed remains unmade all day, discarded or dropped things, some crushed, some broken, accumulate on the floor; the fire is seldom lighted, and we live on coffee'.

'Dark nurse of sleep, star-fingered shepherdess, look in at her window and quiet her restlessness.'

This is good writing, surely, and if it were not so good, the novel would be almost too painful to read, for it is a cry *de profundis*. The cry is that love itself is the original sin (in the sense that Newman wrote 'We are all implicated in some dreadful aboriginal calamity') 'because we cannot escape lust, and cannot escape the spiritual murder of the loved ones with hearts held up like fatal evidence in their hands.'

'For Freedom is the knowledge of necessity, and the necessity of the human is love, and the necessity of love is existence, and the necessity of existence is two sinning in a bed, and the necessity of two sinning in a bed is to be forgiven. It is thus that our only Freedom is to be damned.'

ROOSEVELT IN RETROSPECT

By John Gunther. *Hamish Hamilton.* 21s.

Reviewed by Max Beloff

There are few better journalists than John Gunther; and no journalist could have a greater subject than Franklin Roosevelt. The result is a book which even those familiar with some of the great output of literature on Roosevelt that Mr. Gunther so obligingly catalogues in his bibliography will want to read at a sitting from cover to cover, tearing the heart out of it, as Mr. Gunther has tried to tear the heart out of the President, and to show in a vulgar but expressive colloquialism 'what made him tick.' It is an important book, because Mr. Gunther, whose pertinacity and indefatigability are legendary, has not only read everything about Roosevelt (though even he has quailed before the 'fifty tons' of unpacked archives at Hyde Park) but also bothered to question those who knew him and who have not written.

Probably they will say in the history books, if they have sense, that Roosevelt was the greatest of the American pragmatists. If we are unlucky, they may have to add that he was the last pragmatist, the last who believed one could, and up to a point proved one could, perform one's job in politics of making the world a better place without bowing to an ideology or an 'ism'. In a world of encroaching fanaticisms, the memory even of the muddle, the incoherence, the extravagance and the inconsistencies of the New Deal is heartening. People remember about it the 'brain trust'; but in fact, as Mr. Gunther implies rather than shows, the 'brain trust' was almost an irrelevancy. The intellectuals had their little place in the sun and some could take it, and some not; but the really big achievements were getting the whole thing going and making of a necessary and genuine revolution a revolution by consent. Only a man supreme in politics—and with the vices as well as the virtues of the politician—could have done the job.

Of course the weaknesses in Roosevelt were important—not so much the intellectual inconsistencies and a certain non-

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chalance about the technical aspects of policy—but the lack of system in administration, the dislike of clean cuts, the occasional element of shiftiness and political vindictiveness that left some justly aggrieved souls by the wayside. And, of course, some of these weaknesses were more conspicuous when comparatively late in his career—only eight years before he died—Roosevelt was called upon to deal with the politics of the outer non-American world. If Mr. Chamberlain was wrong in thinking one could do business with one set of fanatics as though they were business men from the Midlands, Mr. Roosevelt was wrong in thinking that you could deal with another set by the methods so admirably practised and expounded by Edward J. Flynn. But the great decisions in this field, too, were the right ones.

All this is clearer outside America than inside it. And the hatred of many Americans for Roosevelt, and all he stood for, are as difficult for some non-Americans to appreciate as it has been for foreigners to understand the extraordinary gesture by which the British electorate repudiated Churchill for Attlee. But the other side of the medal is important, too. Roosevelt was loved as well as hated; millions of Americans, as Mr. Gunther points out, will go on voting for him for the rest of their lives; and if they had understood this more clearly, some political prophets would have looked less foolish in 1948.

The only way to deal with a pragmatist is to show him in action. And this is easier in America, like all serious political writing, because the oppressive weight of reticence does not inhibit the serious writer. We have no Gunthers—and all our political figures are pasteboard unless, like Churchill, enthusiastically self-revealing—and how much does Churchill keep back? On one important matter, this lack of reticence may put the Roosevelt story into a new perspective, and that is by the detail with which Mr. Gunther expounds not only his illness but also its after-effects. The most stupendous of all the Roosevelt decisions was taken on his wife's promptings against his mother's—to go back into politics despite a cripping disability—how crippling these pages will reveal to many for the first time.

THE MIDDLE EAST

W. B. Fisher. *Methuen.* 27s. 6d.

Reviewed by H. S. Deighton

Recent events in Korea have shown that the conflicts of the Great Powers are often fought out among the peoples of the less developed areas of the world. There is, of course, nothing new in this. A good many areas of the first importance, strategically or economically, are inhabited by peoples who would have seemed 'backward' to our grandfathers, and who would today be called 'under-privileged'—with more expressiveness, perhaps, than regard for accuracy. Since the interests of the Powers became world-wide, areas such as these have always been a likely source of war. For over a hundred years, the persistent 'Near Eastern Question' was the most frequent occasion of crises, and the recent prominence of Pacific affairs implies no lessening of the importance of this vital area where three continents are linked. Indeed, the Middle East has twice in thirty years been the scene of large-scale fighting and it has, during this century, doubled its importance by emerging as the world's second largest source of oil.

'Geographers,' wrote Dean Swift, two centuries ago, 'in Afric maps, with savage figures fill their gaps.' It is, no doubt, a sign of the advance of knowledge that the contemporary geographer has so many facts at his command as to make hard work both of writing and reading. Not that even today his facts are all equally hard ones. Middle Eastern census figures, for example, are still to some extent dependent upon whether the object of the survey was believed to be the collection of a poll-tax or the issue of ration books, and, as Mr. Fisher dryly remarks—'some difficulty attaches to the computation of the occupants of harems.' Nevertheless, he has a cautious, but useful and convincing, chapter on 'Demographic Trends', and one, full of detail, about oil—another matter upon which it is perhaps wise to assume that there are still some secrets to be learned. But it is in his anxiety to blend history with geography that he is most representative of advanced opinion: opinion which has had more weight, and with useful results, in France, where he has

studied under the inspiration of the late Professor Demangeon, than in Scotland, where he now teaches at the University of Aberdeen.

A wider field offers more scope for errors, and Mr. Fisher's historical chapters are not always accurate—it is quite untrue to describe the early Ottoman Turks as fanatical and intolerant towards Christians and Jews, just as it is wrong, in spite, perhaps, of appearances, to call the seventeenth century the greatest period of Turkish power. History, paradoxically, is the least constant of studies—it is altered by new opinions, new discoveries and, in the case of contemporary history, it is added to by the unfolding of events. Mr. Fisher's historical chapters were written apparently in 1948 and it is unfortunate for him that the past two years have seen both the publication of a revealing new work on the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the State of Israel (which is not mentioned in this book). But these faults do not invalidate his case for a closer alliance of geography and history.

AUTHORITY AND DELINQUENCY IN THE MODERN STATE

By Alex Comfort. *Routledge & Kegan Paul.* 8s. 6d.

Reviewed by Thomas Southall

I think it was Aldous Huxley who once gave an opinion to the effect that no really civilised person ever became a policeman. If Dr. Comfort's analysis is right, few even moderately civilised people will want, or indeed will be able, to become politicians. The case he seeks to make is that Government has become not only the opportunity, but, by reason of increasing centralisation, the natural and encouraged occupation for aggressive personalities of so advanced a nature as to be delinquent. Centralised government, he points out, creates two classes of governers: the policy-makers, and the enforcers of the policy. The delinquent aggressive is equally welcome, and equally at home in either class. Naturally, Dr. Comfort takes some illus-

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trations from the immediately departed totalitarians, but he is insistent that the 'social democracies' cannot murmur complacently: 'Yes, but that can't happen here.' That is far from true, because the smaller the junta, the less the opportunity to penetrate into it, or to obtain the key position, whereas under Parliamentary Government the numbers who can obtain some share of power and the chance to increase their influence are considerable. World Government, he contends, would merely exacerbate the evil. For indeed *ex hypothesi*, its components, executive and administrative alike, would be the very pick of each nation's successful delinquents.

That central government has become more and more capable of large-scale evil is only too obvious. On the face of it, there is something in what Dr. Comfort says. From the book, one feels that what really shocked Dr. Comfort (and of those who pause to think, who is not shocked?) and turned his mind to this line of thought was the dropping of the atom bomb and the apparently ready service given to destruction by the scientist.

What is Dr. Comfort's remedy? In all the recent analysis of our discontents, one has been far more impressed by the delineation of the causes of the evils than by the suggested means of reformation. Dr. Comfort's suggestion is no more convincing than the others. It is the one theoretically complete answer of the man of thought to the man of action: the anarchy of non co-operation to the point of non-violent resistance—in this case especially amongst sociologists. Although he speaks with force of the powers of executive propaganda, I think he underrates its potency and the sheep-like propensities of the vast majority of human beings. His suggestion is about as effective as a meeting of thoughtful mastodons agreeing to go on living on grass and to ignore the advancing ice.

Dr. Comfort gives no contemporary examples of delinquents in government. In a tantalising passage he says that he could, but that the law of libel makes it too hazardous. But it would be great fun if he did. Most certainly the public would be interested, and it might even be in the public interest.

IBSEN, AN APPROACH

By Janko Lavrin. *Methuen.* 12s. 6d.

Reviewed by V. C. Clinton Baddeley

The frontispiece to Janko Lavrin's book is an impressive portrait of Ibsen, and how well, one thinks as one examines it, how well did Beerbohm analyse that face in his famous cartoon. The great head and the puffy whiskers were easy, more difficult the cold, wide-awake, pugnacious, unfriendly eyes. Janko Lavrin bids us approach—but cartoon and portrait both suggest the unapproachable.

The book begins with a brief summary of Ibsen's career—the early period in Norway, the twenty-seven years of triumphant exile in Italy and Germany, the last years at home again, where 'immaculately dressed in his frock-coat and silk top-hat, he took his daily walks along the same streets, sat at the same table in the same café (where all the customers respectfully rose whenever he entered) and went home at the same time—with the regularity of clockwork. He was also fond of displaying his numerous decorations, which he used to collect and covet with the relish of a *nouveau riche* enjoying all the external insignia of his own importance.'

Between the summary and the portrait we see the man very clearly—and are not attracted to him by any charm or warmth of personality. But we are very willing to approach, and the pity is that our guide should lead us through so many morasses, where the feet are caught in long sedges of rhythmless phrases, and sometimes soused in a deep pathos.

With the best will to follow, it is not easy to approach across such dismal obstacles. But if the reader will pick himself up and stumble on, he will find that the going becomes easier and the path firmer beneath the feet, until, in the analysis of the individual plays, the author does at length carry us into the presence.

But the most interesting and the most revealing things in this book are from Ibsen's own pen. It is entertaining to hear him grumbling about the liberation of Rome in 1870: 'I must confess that the only thing I love about liberty is the struggle for it; I care nothing for the possession of it.'

A YEAR OF GRACE

By Victor Gollancz. *Gollancz.* 10s. 6d.

Reviewed by Henry Treece

It is not an uncommon procedure in English Letters for a writer to make his own anthology of extracts from the prose and verse of others who have pleased him. What is uncommon about *A Year of Grace* —a personal book of thanksgiving, arranged 'to express a mood about God and man'—is its balance and sweet reasonableness. It is a personal book that belongs not only to Mr. Gollancz, but to everyone.

Mr. Gollancz believes that this book should be read straight through as a continuous work by one hand, as it were. And certainly, read so, it shows not only the moods of God in man, and of man in God, but it adumbrates a working system of belief and action through which a man may find his fellows and himself. It is a synthesis of mystic, aesthetic and philosophical inquiry; a handbook of comfort and guidance on many planes.

The core of this book for me is the section called 'Acceptance': 'by accepting reality—taking things as they are, and not as I wanted them to be—by doing all this, rare knowledge has come to me . . . What a fool I was! How I tried to force everything to go according to my idea,' writes one of Jung's patients. How obvious this seems, yet how blind to this lesson most of us are in a world that goes ceaselessly whoring after the false and negative gods of ambition and pride; that tortures itself to the point of exhausted futility on the racks of envy and remorse and hatred!

If I have given the impression, however, that this is a book for the philosopher only, I have failed in my intention. It is a collection for the man who enjoys the poetry of Donne and Thompson, Hopkins and Shelley; or who admires the wide-armed humanity of Albert Schweitzer, or the sly humour and gentle irony of the Hasidic stories. And where before, in an anthology, has one been treated to ten pages of a Beethoven Quartet!

Mr. Gollancz has performed a major feat of compilation no less than of comfort.

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OEDIPUS AND THESEUS

By André Gide, translated by John Russell.
Secker & Warburg. 7s. 6d.

Reviewed by Anthony Curtis

What is the difference between living and partly living? How can the individual attain to the maximum degree of self-realisation? What is the value of self-abnegation? Can reason be trusted? Tremendous questions such as these surge continually beneath the steadily-swelling surface of Gide's prose; and from time to time his conclusions crash down with the force of falling breakers upon the reader's consciousness. For to read Gide is to know oneself with greater acuteness. He is one of those few modern writers who have formulated the modes in which we now ponder existence. He is in part responsible for the mind of contemporary man.

The most disturbing moral conflict which can be played out is the one between a living acceptance of the mysteries of Christianity and the belief that man is a wholly self-sufficient being, the creator of his own essence who owes no transcendental allegiance. In this little volume, part of the English standard edition of Gide, the figures of Oedipus and Theseus personify the two aspects of this conflict. Gide conceives of Oedipus as a hero whose *hubris* or original sin was not his incestuous marriage, but his sense of his own self-sufficiency, which derived from his belief that he was a natural child, and is symbolised by his solution of the riddle of the Sphinx. 'How hideously,' he laments, 'am I rewarded for that riddle . . . who congratulated myself on not knowing my parents! Thanks to which I married my mother—alas! alas!—and with her all my past.' This is the key to the new conception. Oedipus's reaction to the horror is to pluck out his eyes—a refusal to fulfil his destiny in a tainted world—after which, like Tiresias, he sees only with spiritual eyes and lives in 'celestial dark'.

This much one gathers from the play, *Oedipus*, written twenty years ago, which occupies the first part of the book. But Oedipus returns for a final dialogue with the other hero at the end of *Theseus*, a philosophic *conte* which, already three years old, is the latest of Gide's works. Here Oedipus re-tells what happened to him with the clearer perception of retrospect. The eye-plucking was not an act of rational repentance, but of instinctive protest, a gesture of self-hatred which, however, provided access to the world of reality. Theseus, like the reviewer, has to confess that he does not fully understand this. He confesses, also, conqueror, founder of Athens, undefeated, remorseless and isolated as he is (the very archetype of a successful existentialist), to a feeling of inferiority before Oedipus. And yet, at the end of the story, Theseus is able to say, 'I have lived.' His life has been one in which, throughout, the self has been master of the self. He has succumbed neither to the snare of intellection—Icarus typifies this danger—nor has he ever become the slave of the monster, sensuality—for Gide, the meaning of the Minotaur. The irrefrangible iron thread of his own will, fastened to the devotion of another, whom he later abandons, enabled him to escape from the monster's labyrinth. But, of course, he made mistakes. Moral freedom does not consist in freedom from irrevocable error. Theseus, believing Phaedra's lie, acting on an instinctive impulse, as Oedipus did when he blinded himself, murders his own son. Such is the maturely-stated challenge which this book presents.

Mr. John Russell's translation is hardly more than adequate, but the fault is not his. This kind of stuff is untranslatable, not because of its profundity, but because neither of the two *genres* exist in our own literature. Mr. Russell has, moreover, provided a compactly pertinent introduction.

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GORMENGHAST

By Mervyn Peake. *Eyre & Spottiswoode.* 15s.

Reviewed by Maurice Collis

Gormenghast completes the story begun in *Titus Groan* which was published in 1946. The unusualness of *Titus Groan* put the critics on their mettle; they tried their best to fathom its mood and discover whether it was an extravaganza, a vision or what; but found it impossible to pin down Mervyn Peake in a category. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the book was remarkable for its style, its independence, its individuality and its sustained fancy. *Gormenghast* deserves all the compliments that were paid to *Titus Groan.* Indeed, if this were possible, it is stranger and yet more compelling. The two taken together are an integral whole and amount to a literary feat, to which it would be hard nowadays to find a parallel.

After it is said that the volumes are one novel, the difficulties of the critic begin. It is not that the plot cannot be easily stated. That is clear enough: the Earls of Sepulchrave, a most ancient family, have their seat at Gormenghast, a pile so huge that it is a world in itself, a sort of Forbidden City like the palace of the Son of Heaven. It is supposed that no person from the outer world ever comes to it and that none of its inmates, who are numerous, go beyond its grounds, though their way of life belongs to the English nineteenth century. This fiction raises obvious questions which Mervyn Peake is careful not to answer. The object of the convention is to achieve the remoteness required to provide his imagination with elbow room. In this setting, the details of which are enormously elaborated, the seventy-sixth Earl of Sepulchrave lives his macabre life and dies demented, and his heir, Titus, grows up, until finally he flees in horror from Gormenghast. So much for the plot.

The total length of the two volumes is nine hundred pages, or four hundred thousand words, equal to four or five ordinary novels. In spite of this immense length, Mervyn Peake's style is the opposite of diffuse. Indeed, each sentence is so compact with meaning that it requires to be read carefully like a line of poetry. The

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scenes, all of which are startling and give the impression of a mind revelling in its power of invention, may be compared to vast canvases in which every detail is visualised, not only with delicate precision but with a wealth of colour and suggested association. The labour involved in such a sustained flight of style daunts one to think of.

But what of the mood? Some clue to this may be found in the quotation from Bunyan which is prefixed to the first volume: 'Dost thou love picking meat? Or would'st thou see a man in the clouds, and have him speak to thee?' Peake is the man in the clouds and his voice calls us away from picking meat to take a fantastic promenade beyond the confines of this world. We behold a succession of pictures, unlike any seen before, which are not tragic or romantic, nor yet are symbols of anything in particular, but partake of comedy in the large sense found in *Moby Dick* or even *Pantagruel*, a limitless laughter that is compound of wildness and beauty.

THE IMMORTAL LOVERS

ELIZABETH BARRETT AND ROBERT BROWNING

By Frances Winwar. *Hamish Hamilton.* 15s.

Reviewed by Hugo Manning

The biography which recreates and interprets all, or most of, the facets of its subject's life is relatively rare. What we usually get is the accentuation of *some* facets. This is not necessarily a failing, because it is often best for a biographer to concentrate on that which evokes his or her natural sympathy and understanding. But this sort of gravitational approach has its dangers. For example, it is not difficult to lose sight of the fundamental achievements of certain individuals when their private lives have outstanding features which excite exceptional interest. Byron and Gauguin are cases in point. Can Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning—because of the knight-and-the-dragon-and-the-fair-princess characteristics in the romantic web of their private lives—be placed in the same category? The relatively recent stage and film attempts to use them for the theme of love triumphant do not gainsay this. And the rather catchpenny title of Miss Winwar's book might also suggest that they have been conjured up again for the sake of a biographical jaunt among the splendours of Eros. But this is not so. There are no lurid colours in this reconstruction of the lives and *milieu* of the two poets, and the biographer, despite the concentration on their social and esoteric experiences, does not forget to remind us from time to time that they also wrote verse. But the reader who expects to find a completely new psychological interpretation of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning will be disappointed. What we are given is an interlineation to an unique relationship which clarifies, and in some ways extends, what is already known. Miss Winwar does little more than skim the surface of their essential characters. Within these limitations, however, she has produced a brilliant and highly readable biography.

The method in dealing with the central characters before the eventual fusion of their lives might be described as contrapuntal—a glimpse of the development of one and then over to the parallel development of the other. The love-duet is already well under way by the time the poets meet. There is no lack of vividness about some of the figures and incidents which filled their world: the fat John Kenyon in the rôle of Cupid, the Titian-haired spaniel Flush like an unsleeping witness and companion, Elizabeth's escape from the psychopathic domination of her father, the resourcefulness of love planning a strategy of freedom, the mating of poets, the travail at Casa Guidi and so on. Few relationships between a man and a woman could have had such tenderness and sensitivity. But particularly for Elizabeth it was a relationship not without dark undercurrents: her own bad health and the evil possessiveness of her father who could neither forgive her husband nor accept and love her child. After her death we have the feeling that much of the magic is shorn from Robert Browning. The spectacle is of a dignified and practical gentleman moving willy-nilly towards death and immortality.

NEW NOVELS

Reviewed by Stevie Smith

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By Marcel Aymé. *The Bodley Head.* 10s.
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By Guido Piovene. *Peter Kimber.* 10s. 6d.
A LITTLE STONE
By Paul Bowles. *John Lehmann.* 9s. 6d.
GRASPING THE VIPER
By Hervé Bazin, *Secker & Warburg.* 8s. 6d.

We find Monsieur Aymé's little French town of Blémont in a state of mind which will be only too familiar to readers of the contemporary French novel. The citizens have been debauched by violence; they have been conquered, occupied, bombed and liberated. And now both conquerors and liberators have departed, and nothing is left but ruins, cunning and discomfort, and the hatreds which run like fire, the bitter hatreds of a conquered country, the private hatreds masquerading as political justice. It might be tedious to read again about this, if Monsieur Aymé were not such a distinguished and witty writer, a writer very much with a vision of his own. To begin with, he sets our sympathies offside. It is the 'Fascist beast', the wretched hunted Maxime Loin, we are inclined to pity. He is being sheltered in a house which is already rather crowded. There are the bourgeois owners with their lovely daughter, and the schoolboy son who shares his bed with Maxime and plans to betray him. Upstairs is the curious person Watrin, who teaches mathematics. This Watrin loves everybody; he loves the puzzled children, the brutal young men, the sad returning prisoners, the wily officials, anxious to be on the side of the strong; he loves the bar-keeper Leopold who has become infatuated with Racine's Andromache and tries to write himself into the play: 'Let me take Astyanax, we're getting out of here. No sense in waiting till the coppers nab us from the rear'; he loves the violent, timid Communist who has gouged out the eyes of the helpless prisoner; but most of all he loves the natural world, the beetles, the sunshine, the elephants and the miasmas. Why does he love the world and its children so much? It is because

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he dreams each night of the cold wet planet Uranus . . . 'and Watrin slept in the grip of Uranus, at the centre of a still black soundless and frozen world . . .' This is the dream that the madman dreams, but it is also the dream that stretches towards the reader of this book. So for all the laughter and the cruelty, the violence, the infatuations and the truly human feelings, there is the suggestion of this outside final coldness creeping nearer as the angry people crouch with their tommy-guns and knuckle-dusters around the human fireside they take so much for granted, the fireside that only Watrin recognises for what it is —a point of life in a wilderness of stars.

Confessions of a Novice is translated from the Italian. The young girl Margherita Passi is about to become a nun. But she has doubts of her vocation, and to explain these doubts she writes a letter to Father Scarpa giving the story of her life from early childhood. It is a fair-seeming letter and the priest replies and sends copies of the letters to the Mother Superior. The girl now writes an anonymous letter to the Bishop accusing the Mother Superior of holding 'the girl Passi' against her will. The Bishop instructs his Secretary, Father Paolo Conti, to examine the matter; Father Conti receives letters from the girl, and, against his better judgment, writes directly to her—at first with wisdom, 'you have drawn a ring of wickedness round yourself in order to cultivate the guilty sweetness of your own heart', but later he is suborned by the air of reasonableness in the false letters. For this enlarging correspondence is grounded in the evil of falsehood. The girl appears to be in great moral danger; she says that her mother holds her in a close vicious situation, that she is forced to listen to the 'nauseating details' of this middle-aged woman's life with the lover who is tiring of her; and she tells of her own love for the young man who is shot. But now the mother writes and accuses her daughter; she says that the girl shot the young man, that she is a murderer. Evilly, and still with this appearance of candour, the girl accuses the priest, who has tried to help her, of rape. By means of these extraordinary letters, the story of the girl is built up in a very subtle fashion and the girl's character is shown

and the character of her mother and of all the people in her life who are touched by this evil and lost in it. The girl Margherita and her mother are liars; they are wretched people caught up in the mirage of a flattering dream that has destroyed them and will destroy all who are close to them. The limpid style of the writing increases the horror of the situation which it is the purpose of this book to reveal. It is the horror of madness speaking with a reasonable voice, of evil mouthing the false words of an innocence that has been betrayed. It is remarkable within the strict formula of letter-writing to have driven the story forward with such precision, to have shown so much of the heart that is self-deceiving and deceived. It is a book of great power and clarity.

Mr. Bowles is a writer who has power over words; he uses them like a poet; he sees with freshness and delight everything in the hot tropic countries he is writing about; the people, too, are like tropic plants; there is always more strength in the atmosphere of the story than in the point. Most of the stories take place in tropic America. Two people who are on their honeymoon—they hate each other so much that by now they cannot speak—are going by ship up a tropic narrow river where the trees on the banks are woven together overhead. Into this dark green tunnel the wife runs to get away from her husband. There is the story of the Protestant pastor; the black sunshine and the Indians became the living fiend he fled from; but the little Indian girl, who came to his services, hugging the young alligator she had dressed in a bonnet and cloak, was given him for his wife. There is the story of the ancient monastery in the enclosed steep valley which is where the spirit Atlajala has his tramping-ground. First he entered into the bodies of the poor monks, driving them to frenzies of flagellation; only in the body of the woman who came later to the valley with her lover in the little car does he find what he wanted. He helps the woman by driving her lover over the cliff. Mr. Bowles writes with beauty and fear, and it is for these emotions he must be read.

The theme of *Grasping the Viper* is the seducing power of hatred. Madame Rezeau

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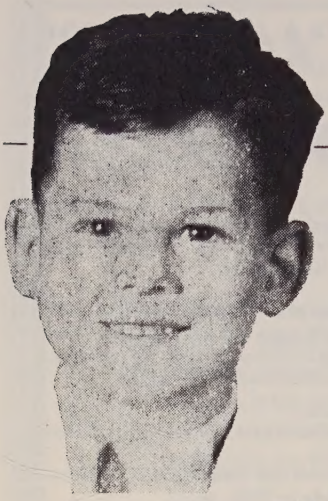

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hates her sons and especially she hates the one who is called Firebrand. She is a rich, mean, cruel woman who has married a man of family. But Monsieur Rezeau seeks refuge from his wife in the study of insects and in his family pride—he is cruel from weakness; he stands aside, but his wife is as strong as she is cruel. The story of the ding-dong battle between the children and their mother is told by Firebrand and the author gives to this child a power of sardonic vituperation which admirably suits the situation. Madame Rezeau institutes a public stripping of conscience. The little boy Freddie kneels down, '"I have been very good today . . . The sin of pride," yapped mother.' '*La Folle, la cochonne*,' yells Freddie as the children are going to bed. So suddenly the violent terms are telescoped and mother is christened Folcoche, dirty folcoche. The children, battered and pestered, tutored by down-at-heel priests, starved, ill-clad, worked as farm hands, half frozen in cold rooms, hate mother with a splendid hatred; especially Firebrand hates her; they even try to murder her. There is nothing in this savage family life that the boy Firebrand does not see and understand. He knows Mother in every detail of her wickedness and he sees in her a reflection of himself. He feels with childish pride that they are well matched. This author knows very well the attraction of strong hatred. It is not by the weak father full of mercenary feelings that the little boy Firebrand is destroyed; he sees his father's hypocrisy and turns aside smiling. But that strength in the dragon Folcoche—that is attractive. So in the end, although a battle has been won, and Firebrand at the age of sixteen is to go away to school, the war is lost because he is already ruined. In a final soliloquy, which is sadly melodramatic, he announces that he is evil and will be evil. Almost the boy and his mother shake hands in the battle lull as he goes off to school. . . 'Thank you Mother, I am he who marches on grasping the viper.' But the girl he has already seduced, and the women he will continue to seduce without affection, are Madame Rezeau's victims too and the proof of her triumph. Monsieur Bazin is a fine writer and he is well served by his translator.

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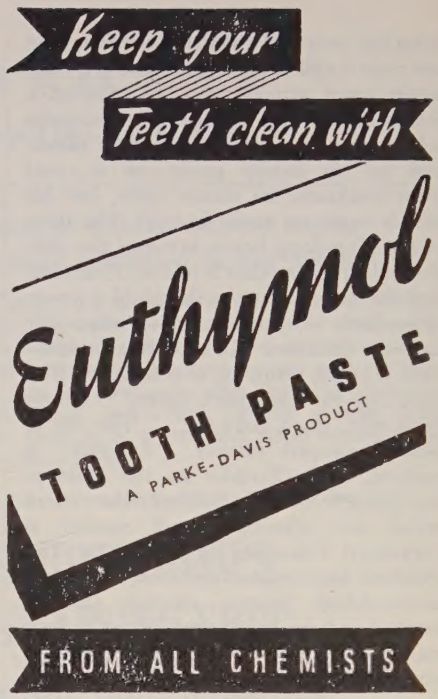

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